# Mountbatten and the Partition of India

March 22 – August 15, 1947

Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre

TARANG PAPERBACKS
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# FOREWORD

We are proud and honoured to present our millions of readers and friends throughout India, this collection of documents specially selected from the huge amount of material that was collected in the course of the three years' research devoted to the preparation of *Freedom at Midnight.*

This research was perhaps the most monumental work any historian had dared to undertake to do justice to one of the most important and significant periods in the history of the world, this "rare moment" when, as the great Indian statesman and world leader, Jawaharlal Nehru said at the stroke of midnight, August 15, 1947 "an age ends and the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance".

If we are offering today the best of the harvest, it is because we feel deep in our hearts that this material belongs to the Indian heritage. It is our hope that it will contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of a precious past and induce new generations of Indians, born after independence, to learn more about their glorious history.

Our research for *Freedom at Midnight* included over a thousand personal interviews in Britain, Pakistan, India and any other part of the world where someone of interest could contribute to the reconstruction of the events which led to the end of the British Raj and the freedom of one-fifth of mankind. We travelled more than 300,000 miles and collected some 900 kgs of official and secret documents, reports, diaries, memos, letters, tapes, films and photographs. In the execution of this mammoth task we invested more than two million rupees, almost all we had earned from our previous bestsellers, *Is Paris Burning?* and *O Jerusalem!*

Our research began in England in the summer of 1971, where we travelled for six months from one cottage to another, meeting the last survivors of the Raj. We spent days with some of them, patiently reconstructing their memories of the end of the last great colonial empire of modern times. One day we even met the man who had scissored the map of northern India with the boundary lines of partition, in the rectory near Birmingham where he lives today in peaceful retirement—Sir Cyril Radcliffe was trimming his roses when we arrived at his home. A further volume in the series, of which this is the first, will incude in full, our interviews with this man who was so instrumental in forging the destiny of the Indian subcontinent.

The most important personality we were to meet in England was, of course, the last great protagonist still alive of those momentous days of 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten, last Viceroy and first Governor-General of independent India. His personal interviews with us and the paper and documents relating to his historic mission in India, both as Viceroy and as Governor-General, constitute the vital material contained in this present volume, to be followed by a second. This material has never before been available for public scrutiny. We ourselves had to obtain a very exceptional permission from Her Majesty, the Queen of England, to obtain access to it, and use it in the preparation of *Freedom at Midnight.*

After our long working pilgrimage in Britain, we packed a set of lightweight clothes in our suitcases, collected our wives and children, and flew out to Pakistan and India. This migration was to last more than twenty months. They were, perhaps, the best months of our lives. Our work in the subcontinent was to take on many aspects. For instance, our very first, even before attempting to reconstruct the actual historical events, was to paint a faithful portrait of India herself. (And here we must ask our Indian readers to remember one thing: *Freedom at Midnight* was never written for Indians. It was primarily written for those millions of

readers around the world who had read and enjoyed our previous books on Paris, Spain and the Middle East. The great majority of those readers had never set foot on the subcontinent. (Some didn't even know where India was.) It was a difficult task! How is it possible to accurately describe, in a few pages, the multi-dimensional and heterogenous realities of such a vast country, with all its peoples, religions, castes, customs, cultures, languages, and fantastic variety of natural surroundings? Yet this particular aspect of our writing was vital if we wanted to engage the attention of our non-Indian audience and persuade them to read this great account of Indian history. This meant we had first to immerse ourselves in the Indian atmosphere. For several months we toured India and Pakistan, from Kashmir to Kerala, from Sind to Bengal, from the North West Frontier Province to the jungles of Mysore, meeting hundreds of Indians and Pakistanis, of all castes, cultures, religions and languages. We travelled aboard the fast and comfortable planes of Air India and Indian Airlines and the second class bogies of the Indian Railways; we travelled in old beat-up Ambassador taxis, squeaking rickshaws, and kamikaze scooters; we even travelled on elephant back and at the majestic pace of bullock-carts. And we walked. Miles and miles, on the roads of Punjab, for instance, and in the blazing heat of summer to understand, physically, and emotionally what had been the ordeal of those millions who 25 years earlier, had suffered the agony of the largest human exodus in history.

We then undertook a series of intimate pilgrimages in the footsteps of those historical giants who had changed the destiny of their subcontinent by breaking the chains of foreign rule, and giving their 400 million compatriots their liberty. We thus spent many months researching on Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah and other leaders, interviewing hundreds of their relatives, disciples, aides and friends, examining every possible piece of paper, letter, report or diary connected with their actions. We also spent four weeks with six of the men who killed Gandhiji on January 30,

1948. Nobody, not even the police after the murder, had ever submitted these criminals to the thorough questioning and cross-examination we forced upon them, for the sake of describing and understanding their crime. A subsequent volume, also to be published by Vikas, will offer readers an exhaustive account of these different aspects of our research.

Many of our friends in India and abroad have asked us what pushed us to devote four years of our lives to writing *Freedom at Midnight.* Apart from an earnest desire to locate at least one of our books in the extraordinary environment of India, we felt that what had happened in New Delhi on August 15, 1947 was not only momentous in the history of a whole continent, but also decisive in the history of the whole world. After August 15, 1947 our planet Earth was never going to be the same. The process set in motion that night at the stroke of midnight, would repeat itself in the four corners of the globe. With the end of colonial rule and the birth of the Third World, one page of our history had turned.

In spite of this tremendous evidence, most of our foreign publishers begged us not to choose this theme. After the success of our epic *O Jerusalem!* published in 1971, they felt that we owed our readers a great book on China, not India. We persuaded them to the contrary. And the 60 million readers who read *Freedom at Midnight* in 27 languages around the world have overwhelmingly ratified our choice.

As for us, we will never forget these beautiful and rich years of research and work in India and Pakistan. We are grateful for this opportunity to express our gratitude to all our Indian and Pakistani friends, known and unknown, by offering them this selection from Lord Mountbatten's personal archives, which we feel belongs to them and their children, and which, hopefully will give them a chance to enrich their knowledge of the glorious history of their countries.

LARRY COLLINS
DOMINIQUE LAPIERRE

*Part I*

# INTERVIEWS

*a selection of personal interviews with*
*Lord Louis Mountbatten, March 22—August 15, 1947*

The interviews with Lord Mountbatten presented in this volume were recorded in the years 1971, 1972 and 1973 in the course of some twenty work sessions we were privileged to have with the last Viceroy and the first Governor-General of India. Most of these sessions took place in Lord Mountbatten's family mansion, Broadlands, near Southampton, in the south of England. Some took place in London, in the Chelsea flat where he stayed two or three days, each week, to attend to the innumerable private or official tasks he still fulfilled, despite his age.

We first met Lord Mountbatten at a luncheon, organised at their residence, by the French Ambassador to England and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Geoffroy de Courcel. Courcel had been General de Gaulle's ADC in 1940 when the leader of France's resistance against Nazi Germany started his crusade. He was a personal friend of Mountbatten and our meeting with the last Viceroy could not have been more auspicious. It turned out also that Mountbatten had read all our books and that he confessed a special admiration for *Is Paris Burning?* Our project to write a book in the same style on the end of the Raj and the transfer of power in the subcontinent, naturally would not leave him indifferent. Between the ambassador's dessert and coffee, we were happy to realize that we had indeed obtained his support and his willingness to let himself be interviewed as many times as necessary. This was absolutely vital for the success of our project since he was the last giant of that epoch, still alive.

That very first day of our acquaintance, we left the French Embassy in his personal Jaguar to drive straight to Broadlands,

where he had agreed to give us his first interview. This first session in the splendid setting of that old Victorian house full of treasures and souvenirs was the prelude to a marvellous and rewarding friendship which was to last until the cruel instant when an assassin's bomb, 31 years after Gandhiji's sacrifice, martyred the man who had liberated India.

In retrospect, these sessions devoted to the reconstruction of the hectic and momentous months of 1947 when Britain relinquished the Raj and India achieved independence, bring back the warmest memories. Of all the great world leaders we have had the privilege to approach in our careers as journalists and historians, Lord Mountbatten will probably always remain the one personality who has left us a most vivid souvenir. His intelligence, his liberalism, his appetite for life, his attention to details, his sense of humour, his human approach to men and events raised him above the commonplace. What struck us immediately was his profound and genuine love for India and the Indians. The difficult and rewarding days that he and Edwina had spent in India were certainly among the most cherished and significant of their memories in their long and eventful lives. There was not a day when we did not witness the arrival of some mail from India asking for more intervention or help, not a day when we didn't see Mountbatten engaged in some action for the cause of his Indian friends. On his desk stood two portraits of Nehru and Gandhi in silver frames, and on a commode in the drawing-room was the famous photograph taken in the Moghul Gardens of Viceregal Lodge showing Gandhiji walking, with his hand gently leaning on Edwina's shoulder.

Some of our Indian readers have criticized the importance we gave to Mountbatten in *Freedom at Midnight.* We have indeed given the last Viceroy a pivotal role in our book, but we feel every bit of it is justified by the reality of historical truth. Moreover, we feel very strongly that it was India's, and Britain's

good fortune to have at such a crucial junction in their common history, statesmen of such stature as Louis Mountbatten, Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Vallabhbhai Patel. Many colonial nations were not so fortunate and were forced to pay the price of their freedom with bloody wars.

The interviews presented here are certainly the most complete introspection ever undertaken by the last Viceroy of India on his memories. We felt that Mountbatten enjoyed every bit of the ordeal we forced upon him. As a matter of fact, we honestly feel that we gave him the last great joy of his life through our project, *Freedom at Midnight*. Mountbatten possessed a phenomenal memory. He could recall the dates and circumstances of each of his meetings with the Indian leaders as well as the exact content of their conversations. He could remember the name of his bearer, the colour and age of Edwina's horse, the shape of Jinnah's sherwani, the number of polo goals scored by the Maharajah of Jaipur, even the name of the British firm that had made the lanterns for his golden state coach. But whenever he had a doubt, whenever some hesitation crept into his mind, he would not hesitate to interrupt an interview. He would disappear from the drawing-room where he had been sitting. His absence would last twenty or thirty minutes—the time taken for him to go down to the basement of his mansion which housed probably the most extraordinary personal archives ever in the possession of a single individual. In Part II in this volume, we will present our readers with a selection of documents from these archives, vital for an understanding of modern Indian history.

LARRY COLLINS
DOMINIQUE LAPIERRE

**Q.** *Why do you suppose the choice to become the last Viceroy fell on you? What ties did you have to India that would have recommended you to Attlee?*

**A.** The BBC in their series, *All Our Yesterdays,** recently did a sort of round-up on India. And they invited a young and very conceited man called James Cameron, and he said these words, "Mountbatten did an extraordinary job of political manipulation without knowing anything about politics. Very, very interesting. He had this strange intuition that he got the information and somehow or other he computerized it and came up with the right answer. But I don't think he could ever have told how he came to that conclusion. Very, very, very, very interesting. In fact he's the only (member of a) Royal House who's done a constructive job as far as I know."

Now to me, the interesting thing about that is—here is an informed newspaper reporter reporting events at the time—who's lived on his experiences, and given lectures and interviews and talks. He actually thinks that I arrived at the right answers by intuition! I couldn't possibly understand what was going on: being a member of the Royal Family, that automatically rules you out from having any sort of brain at all—but God, came to the intuitive answer!

Did I ever show you the little farthing I got for a lecture on India?

*A programme produced by the BBC and narrated by James Cameron, the well known newspaper columnist.

In 1931, a big organization, the Post-War Brotherhood in Portsmouth asked me to lecture, and they said I had to have a fee, and the minimum was a farthing, so I took a farthing. And with it came: "For his brilliant and interesting speech on India" —an hour's duration. 1931.

I only mention that as proof that I've never let go of the subject of India. And that a newspaper correspondent who has set himself up as an authority on India ever since, should so far have misunderstood me, is fascinating. I don't believe he could deny that, beeause it was recorded.

Q. *Why didn't Stafford Cripps* insist on going out as Viceroy himself?*

A. He knew he was not the stuff Viceroys are made of. I believe you've got to have somebody who's got some form of what we call leadership. He had none at all . . . his brother Fred —great hunting man, polo-player, liked good living—he had ten times the leadership Stafford did. You can't have leadership if you don't drink, don't smoke, don't eat, don't. . . . There was the same temptation with Anthony Eden,† I believe. You saw he wanted to come out with me? He knew he had all the answers and I could provide the leadership—what he underestimated (I think they all did) was that I could also provide my own answers. . .

Q. *Do you think the Labour Government was looking for a scape-goat in you—in case it all went wrong?*

*Sir Stafford Cripps, British Cabinet Minister who led the Cabinet Mission to India in March 1942. Member of the British Labour Party, and Chancellor of the Exchequer in Clement Attlee's Cabinet.

†Robert Anthony Eden, (1st Earl of Avon), Prime Minister and leader of the British Conservative Party from April 1955 to January 1957.

**A.** Not by Attlee*—for one very simple reason. Attlee had learnt to respect—not the way I conducted the war, but the way I conducted the post-war liberations, which I did with him. That's what made him choose me.

**Q.** *You brought a Press Attache with you to India. No Viceroy ever had one. That appeared to be the wrong approach. If the Press had to be handled, it should have been done by the Private Secretary, not by some Press Attache. That, many thought, was a big mistake. You were greatly criticized for that and Alan Campbell-Johnson† had a very rough row to hoe when he went to India.*

**A.** "I'll tell you one thing," the King said to me later, "it's the best thing you ever did; we could not have otherwise got through to the world press." You see, they couldn't see the point of that, and that was one of the first appointments I made. Even in England, Attlee said, "Why do you want a Press Attache?" No one saw the point. God, if I hadn't had Campbell-Johnson to soften up the Press. . . . They were absolutely eating out of our hands in the end. If it had gone wrong, we would have had the most awfully tough time.

**Q.** *You mean a Press Attache not only gives out information but also gets feedback?*

**A.** Exactly. You must realize. . . . There was a certain feeling abroad—I'm not talking about jealousy (which there must have been a lot of), I'm talking about disbelief—that with my back-

*Clement Richard Attlee, Leader of the British Parliamentary Labour Party from 1935 to 1955, and Prime Minister from 1945 to 1951.

†Alan Campell-Johnson, Press Attache to Lord Mountbatten when he was Viceroy.

ground, I couldn't possibly do the job. They assumed in every case that someone else did the job for me—and there has never been a person who was more determined to have his own way at every stage. A lot of people still thought I was really the Royal "front".

**Q.** *You had acquired a reputation in the popular press before as a kind of playboy, hadn't you?*

**A.** Yes. Polo, yachting, etc. They actually thought I was an ignorant playboy who was inspired by the war to go out and be a success, whereas of course I'd been a very hard-working, studious chap my entire life—my entire life was a preparation for what came later. . .

**Q.** *What were your own feelings about your appointment?*

**A.** Well, I always had a very curious, subconscious desire to be Viceroy. That came from being out in 1921 and thinking India was the most marvellous country and the Viceroy had the most marvellous job. And in the back of my mind, I always regretted that I couldn't be. I enjoyed being in the Navy, but that was of course why I couldn't be; obviously I couldn't. But there was the fantasy: what fun it would be to be Viceroy! Not only to do all the ceremonial things and the hunting and shooting, but I'd always had a feeling of what should be done for the Indian people. So from every point of view, I would have liked to be Viceroy. Always had. I spoke about it once or twice to my wife and then it happened.

Now here is a story Dominique can check in Paris. Sometime in 1931 my wife was doing a tour of the continent and heard there was a very famous crystal-gazer there who had a record of the most astonishing revelations. My wife was absolutely bilingual in French and went to her very discreetly. There'd been no-

thing in the papers about her visit. Nobody could have known that she wasn't French and certainly not that she was Lady Louis Mountbatten. And this is what she said: "Very curious, very interesting case. I see you sitting on a throne, a sort of royal throne, but isn't quite a royal throne, you're sitting on this throne ruling with your husband." And of course they all laughed and thought it was the silliest forecast she'd ever made. That was about 1931-32.*

My viceroyalty was, of course, entirely different from what I'd seen and envied as a young man, an entirely different fulfillment if you like. It wasn't what I'd looked forward to at all.

Q. *How was the offer in fact made to you?*

A. On Wednesday December 18, 1946 the Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, sent for me and absolutely staggered me. I had no hint whatsoever. He was often asking me for advice about Burma or Malaya. I was frequently called for on these things and I assumed our conversation would be about Burma; instead of which he started—he was sitting in the cabinet room at number 10 Downing Street in the PM's chair and by his left in the Chancellor's chair was Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I sat opposite, alone, as I always did, and it all started in a very friendly, relaxed way, talking about India.

Well, I knew you see, that there were endless discussions going on, that Wavell† in fact was, I think, home at the time, and I thought they were just trying to get my own views on the matter. I'd kept quite close contact with Wavell himself and I knew what was going on. As we went along they began asking more and more searching questions, what did I think ought to be done, how would I approach the thing.

*We checked the story and it was absolutely accurate—*Authors.*

†Lord Wavell, Field-Marshal Sir Archibald, Viceroy of India from 1944 to 1947, succeeded by Lord Mountbatten in March 1947.

I said, "Good God, Mr. Prime Minister, I have a very, very, very, uneasy, unpleasant feeling that you're trying to suggest—no you can't be—are you trying to suggest that you're going to ask me to relieve Archie Wavell?"

He looked around and said, "You weren't supposed to guess so soon."

"But I have guessed haven't I?"

"Yes," he said, "I'm afraid you have."

"Well," I said, "You ought to have your head examined, I wouldn't dream of going out. In Wavell you've got a man who's taciturn, he's silent, but first class. His whole loyalty is for India, the British. You couldn't have a better man and, I said, I believe all his desires have been frustrated by the high command at home. I wouldn't even dream of taking over from him. It's out of the question. It isn't even worth discussing."

Well then we went ahead and they said, no, this wasn't the way they wanted it to go, that we must talk this through, they were going to persuade me. And they went on and explained how they'd reached a very murky stalemate. That Wavell had lost contact with Nehru, with the Congress Party, with Jinnah, the Sikhs and everybody. It isn't that they don't trust him—they don't feel they're getting anywhere. He doesn't seem to have any ideas. We can't go on like this. This really is going to lead to a disaster. A major disaster and we think you're the one person who can pull us out of this. Your base was India. You kept close touch with it. You were out there with the Prince of Wales. You know all the princes.

So I said, "Well I'm not saying yes which is different from saying no. But this is a matter for the King Emperor, isn't it? After all the Viceroy is two people. He's the Governor-General of British India, and the Crown representative for the exercise of paramountcy with the Indian states.

"That's right," they said.

"So to that extent I'm equally responsible to King George."

"That's true."
"So," I said, "I shall have to see him."
"Certainly."

**Q.** *What it foregone that you were going to have to accept?*

**A.** Of course, I then realized that they in fact, had already been to see the King and had discussed the matter with him. When I realized I was not going to be let out by seeing the King who would, if I asked him, recommend against my going out there, I then thought I might as well make the situation as difficult as I could for them, and I started being difficult. I said if I go out I shall require a staff of my own. I must be able to pick anybody, high or low. They are to be made available. If they are in a job, they are to be taken out. If they are in business, they must be bailed out and given their jobs back in business. And I'm going to pick 'em.

Sir Stafford said, "I offer myself to come out as your chief of staff."

I said, "Stafford, that's too great an honour." Imagine trying to work with Stafford Cripps! So I stopped that.

Then I said, "I'd like to take Pug Ismay."*

I said, "I want to take Alan Campbell-Johnson to have a really first class press officer."

I wanted Ronnie Brockman† for my secretariat. I wanted to take Erskine Crum** as my conference secretary. And I wanted to take along a lot of English stenographers to be absolutely independent.

*Lord Ismay, Chief of the Viceroy's Staff, and of the Governor-General's Staff till December 1947.

†Capt. R.V. (Ronnie) Brockman, Personal Secretary to the Viceroy, and Private Secretary to the Governor-General of India from August 15, 1947.

**Lieutenant-Colonel V.F. Erskine Crum, Conference Secretary to the Viceroy and to the Governor-General of India.

"Agreed," they said.

And I said, "I shall want all of Wavell's staff to stay."

"Oh, you want them too?"

"Of course I want them too."

Then I said, "Now conditions are pretty rugged over here. (There was rationing in England at the time, no coal, we were all freezing, no petrol for your cars.) Anybody I choose—it isn't just a question of money, they must get top rates, they must have a house, a motor car, servants and take out their families."

"Agreed," they said.

Then I said, "I shall want an airplane."

"Oh," they said, "the Viceroy already has one."

"Well, he only has a Dakota. I want a four-engined plane, I want my own MW 102."

Then I said, "Well, if I succeed and God knows the chances are very much against me, I will write my own honours list. I shall give people whatever honours they deserve, whether it be peerages or grand crosses and when I write them, they're not going to come for scrutiny. You're just going to sign them 'Approved' when you get them."

"Right," they said.

"Then," I said, "I want to go back to the Navy. I've just been appointed commander of the First Cruiser Squadron, and now if I give that up, it's an 18 month tour—we had talked about a time table—I'd like to have that appointment again or else a comparable one. I'd like it guaranteed, certain. Can you arrange this?"

So Attlee rang the bell and told his secretary, "Ask the First Lord to come in!"

I said, "Not just the First Lord, I want the First Sea Lord as well."

So they brought them in.

Attlee said, "Now then, First Lord, First Sea Lord, I've just

asked Lord Mountbatten to go out to India as Viceroy to succeed Wavell and before accepting he wants the assurance that his acceptance will not prejudice his naval career and he will be offered a comparable job at sea to the one he's got now when he returns. Will you guarantee to arrange this?"

"Of course, Mr. Prime Minister, anything you say, certainly," said the First Lord.

"One moment, not so fast," said the First Sea Lord. "You don't understand, Mr. Prime Minister. Lord Mountbatten was taken as a Captain, made Supreme Allied Commander, South-west Asia. He finished the war as a Captain. We had to dip down 18 months to make him a Rear Admiral at all. He's just become a Rear Admiral. It was touch and go that the board was going to re-employ him. After all, when a man has been a Supreme Commander, with all these senior admirals serving under him, you can't suddenly hand him back, but we thought, well after all, Mountbatten had done fairly well as Supreme Commander, and it's a bad show if military service in war should ban you from service in peace time, so we accepted. But this is different. The Viceroy isn't a Supreme Commander. The Viceroy is the most important man on earth. After this, nobody can accept him. It'd be out of the question. Having the Viceroy under your command? Oh no. That's out. We can't have him back."

Attlee said, "I wasn't asking your approval. I was asking your accord, do you understand?" That settled that.

**Q.** *So your going really was a foregone conculusion?*

**A.** I'm not absolutely certain because I have no records at what stage the next developments occur, but let me tell you what happened.

On the following day, Thursday the 19th of December, I went back to my little house on Chester Street to my wife, my nephw, Prince Philip who wasn't even engaged then, my greatest friend

in the Navy, Charles Lamb who succeeded me as First Sea Lord. We all sat down, and they helped me to draft my reply to the Prime Minister.

Now then, on Friday, 20th, it was arranged for me to see the King. I was met by his private secretary Sir Alan Lascelles, and he then said that if I went out he would like very much to have his son attached to my staff. I went in to see the King. I was announced before.

I said to my cousin the King, "Look a terrible thing has happened."

He said, "I understand, the Prime Minister's already been to see me and I've agreed."

"You have agreed? Have you really thought it over?"

"Oh yes, I have thought it over carefully."

I said, "Do you realize Wavell is caught in a complete impasse. Nobody can foresee any way of finding any agreement between the parties. It's almost impossible to find one. If Wavell's failed, why in the world should I succeed?"

I added, "Look, this is very dangerous. I'm your cousin. If I go out there now and make the most deplorable mess of it, it will reflect very badly on you."

"Yes," he said, "but think how brilliantly it will reflect if you succeed."

I said, "Well, that's very optimistic."

We then went on talking about it for some while and he then said, "I think you should take it. However, think it over, and if you absolutely feel after your next meeting with the Prime Minister that you can't do it, you can come back and I'll then be prepared to say I agree with you and you shouldn't go."

The next thing was that I went that same day to see Lord Ismay because it looked now as though I'd have to go.

He said, "Dickie,* it's marvellous! The last day for me! Seven

*Dickie was the nickname given to Mountbatten by his family and intimate friends.

years of hard labour and at last it's finished. What's more, the governments of Australia and New Zealand have been kind enough to ask me and my wife to go out there and visit for three months as their guests, all paid, and have a lovely time. Can you think of anything more marvellous?"

Well, I didn't have the heart to tell him I wanted him to come with me to India. I said, "Yes, it's wonderful, you deserve a long holiday. Good luck to you."

Then he said, "What's happened to you? Are you going off to command this new cruiser squadron?"

I said, "No, they're probably going to send me out to relieve Archie Wavell in India."

"Good God," he said, "how awful. I couldn't wish a worse thing on my worst enemy. You are not going to take it, are you?"

I said, "I'm going to try to avoid it."

He said, "You can't do it. Nobody can find a solution. It's impossible. It's a mess. Oh God, you stay well away from there."

I said, "I will if I can. But I must warn you that the King's asked me to take it. I'm going to have my last discussions tomorrow."

The next morning early, Pug Ismay came to see me. He said, "Dickie, I'm worried. Why did you come to see me last night?"

"Well, just an old friend coming to call."

"I have an uneasy feeling. I hardly slept all night. You wouldn't have come to see me straight after being asked by the King to go out as Viceroy without possibly wanting me to help you in some way. Do you want me?"

I said, "Look, forget it, of course you're the first person I thought of. I'd like you to come out as my Chief of Staff."

"Good God," he said, "if you're prepared to go out there and play the last chukker 12 goals down,* count me in on the

*A polo expression. To attempt to win on the last chukker of a game when you have 12 goals against you is an impossible venture.

side!"

Thursday, January 2, 1947, Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps came round for lunch and we discussed the whole thing. On January 3, I then went to the Prime Minister and delivered the letter of acceptance of that date.

Q. *Your immediate family? What were their reactions?*

A. The following Sunday, I went around to Kensington Palace where my mother lived. I told her I was going out as Viceroy. She was just short of being 84 years old. She was a woman who was not so much religious, but very correct. She had a brilliant brain, really I learned a lot from her. She was wonderfully widely read and terribly progressive and understanding. I came in to her, to pick her up and drive her down to Broadlands. It was just when I could no longer get out of going out to India, and I broke the news to her.

I said, "I'm very sorry to have to say, I'm not going back to the Navy, to the First Cruiser Squadron as I'd been hoping and you've been hoping too, and to Malta, where you were looking forward to coming out and staying with me. I've been bullied into accepting the job of relieving Archie Wavell as Viceroy of India."

"Viceroy of India? Damn, damn, damn, damn, DAMN!"

I said, "Now, what's the matter?" (and I must explain, that never had the word "Damn" passed my mother's lips. Her mother had died fairly young and she had looked after her brothers and sisters and lived, really, at the court of Queen Victoria. Her grandmother had brought her up in the strictest possible way and no word like "Damn" had ever passed her lips—but now, here was a stream of them).

So, she said, "Don't you understand? There's no solution to India that can be foreseen. Linlithgow's* failed, Wavell's com-

*Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India from 1936 to 1943.

pletely failed, and he's a very able man; the parties cannot agree. Jinnah's absolutely taken up a position, you'll have civil war. The Labour Government know that they've got an impossible situation and they've got to have a scapegoat. And you'll go out there, the great successful Supreme Allied Commander, the cousin of the King. You'll go out there with a great flourish. You cannot hope to succeed."

I said, "This is the most disappointing remark I've ever heard made. You have so little faith in your own son whom you've brought up—as to think I'm not slyer than the Government. If you think that they can get round me, they're not going to. I'm going to tie them up in such knots that I shall succeed at their expense. Now don't worry."

**Q.** *How did your wife Edwina react to the idea of going out as Vicereine?*

**A.** She was very much opposed to it. She thought it couldn't be done.

**Q.** *How did her opposition show?*

**A.** Oh, she said, "Don't go, don't go." We discussed it, and she said, "You're never going to be able to get the right solution because you'll never get the backing of the Governors, and you're not going to get through to the people – if all these other people have failed, why should you succeed?"

**Q.** *Could you discuss things quite frankly?*

**A.** Oh, she was right in—in fact funnily enough, one of the people I discussed it with was my wife and another was, of course, Prince Philip at that time. . . . At one time, he was the only person I could discuss one of the Prime Minister's letters with.

**Q.** *What was your relationship with Prince Philip?*

**A.** Very much like a son, more or less. I mean we were very close. He was very sensible and. . . he wasn't even married at the time, you know. I'm almost certain I have here a record of his having been the only person who could help me with one of the letters from the Prime Minister.

**Q.** *Isn't history's choice fascinating? Victoria's great-grandson chosen to preside over the severing of the link which was supposed to have held the British Empire together for a thousand years?*

**A.** Yes, but you see, that's not the way my mind works. I'll tell you something rather different. What I actually felt. . . . You've got to realise that I firmly believed that although the mass of people were happy with British rule (pause for crumpets) the fact remains that, historically, the Indians had to be allowed to run their own country. We were, therefore, doing nothing under pressure. This is what I want you to understand. I did not consider that they were in fact pushing us out. I came to the conclusion we were going out for two or three reasons.

First of all, it was the policy of this country always to give the Indians their independence when they were brought up to be able to do it—and secondly, we had not the means of carrying on. That's the point I want to make to you. We had stopped recruiting for the Indian Civil Service in 1939. We'd stopped recruiting for the Indian Police. The people carrying on included a lot of people who were past retirement age. They were running it extremely competently—but supposing Churchill had come back, and given a decision that we were not going to discuss anything for 25 years, **I don't know if we could have restored that machine that we had. It had run completely down.**

Q. *Could this personal conviction explain your huge success in India with the Indians?*

A. Although my wife and I had always been known for our progressive outlook, there has to be an explanation of why we got along so exceptionally well in India. The Indians are funny people. You can't fool them. They know if you really love them, then they will love you in return. If you try to put on an act, it won't work.

Now the fortunate thing was that as my wife and I got engaged in India, and had this emotional feeling about it, we were already halfway there because we loved the country and the people.

Therefore we had an emotional involvement with India which psychologically went very deep. We loved India and we loved Indians and we kept close contact with our friends there, many of the princes were our friends. Then, secondly, my time in South East Asia mustn't be overlooked because I had about a million Indians under my command while I was in Burma and I got to know them quite well.

Q. *Let's go back to December 1946 in London and your reaction to your appointment . . .*

A. I'm now, deliberately, painting a very broad picture and not vague ideas. **Not only, of course, did I not want to go to India, as you can imagine—I thought that it was an absolutely hopeless proposition—but I was quite certain that if I went, something new had to be introduced. First thing, I said, we must have an absolute time limit.**

Q. *Why did you say that?*

A. For this very simple reason: all previous negotiations had

been open-ended. There was no one moment. When you have contending and conflicting parties, they go on forever. For instance, Mr. Jinnah would be quite happy to carry on under the British the whole time. The Princes didn't want the British to go. Congress wanted the British to go but absolutely not at the price of the partition of India. Nobody was getting down to it, and I said, "I cannot go there on an open-ended thing and have five years which would be very pleasant. Five years sitting there as Viceroy with nothing happening."

Well, if you look at all my predecessors, they never got anywhere. Remember the Government of India Act, 1935, brilliant as it was, that was Linlithgow trying to get it through; he failed, mainly because of the Princes. Then the Cripps offer,* again was mainly torpedoed by Gandhi, a Cabinet Mission came out and got really precisely nowhere afterwards.

Q. *So you had the idea of a time limit from the very beginning?*

A. From the very outset, from the very first discussion that I ever had with Attlee, I made the great point about it. I said I wasn't going out on an open-ended thing.

He said, "No—we've also come round to thinking we must put in a time limit." We then argued about the time limit: I wanted a precise day, and he said, "Well, the nearest I can give you is some time during the summer or autumn of 1948." I said, "That's not good enough. I want a day."

*On March 11, 1942, a mission headed by a Cabinet Minister, Sir Stafford Cripps, visited India and declared that the aim of the British policy in India was "the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India."

Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities steps would be taken to set up, in India, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India. The right of secession from the commonwealth and of a province to contract out of the federal union were recognized. Party leaders were invited to join the Viceroy's Council, which would be treated as a responsible government.

We went on, and I couldn't tie him down to a day before I went out. Subsequently, when he dictated a book called *A Prime Minister Remembers* to Mr. Francis Williams, he made that ludicrous statement that he had thought of a time limit, and pushed it on to me! I had thought of the time limit, and I had great difficulty in bringing him up to it.

Q. *The fact that you even raised the idea of a time limit would seem to indicate that you had been giving a certain amount of thought to India.*

A. Well, this is true, for a very special reason. As Supreme Allied Commander, the Viceroy was appointed by the British Cabinet to be their Cabinet representative in India. All theatre commands away from the Home Front, had a Minister to go to. For example, the Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East went to the Minister of State, who was at one time Lord Moyne, at one time Mr. Casey and so on, and the Viceroy used to be my Minister of State. It turned out to be an entirely superfluous appointment because at no time did I communicate with him or through him with Churchill. Churchill used to telegraph direct to me, I'd telegraph back direct to him, so I never went through Wavell.

But I felt I had to report to him. As I had a rear H.Q. in Delhi, I used to come up every few weeks, that sort of period, spend a couple of days in Delhi, check over what was going on in my rear H.Q., and have a discussion with the Viceroy.

The whole morning, from 9.30 till 12.30, used to be put down with the Viceroy. Well - as Wavell never spoke at all, he was absolutely inarticulate—I used to start off and say, "Would you like to hear what's happening in Burma?" He'd been my predecessor there—he was the last operational Commander before me.

So I'd tell him what was going on.

He never made any comment at all —at the end of it I'd say, "Well now, have you got any criticism?"

"No, you're doing very well."

"Anything I ought to do?"

"No," he said, "I can't think of anything. You're doing what is right."

I then said, "Now tell me what's going on in India."

Then his whole face lit up – at last he had somebody whom he could unburden himself to without, in any way, being official. I was reporting to him officially, but he had nothing to say to me officially. And so the conversation took place. One day he said to me, "I'm very worried because I had to let Gandhi out of prison because his health is so bad—we couldn't have the old boy die in custody—so I asked the Secretary of State in London, that Gandhi's doctors advise we should release him. I don't approve of releasing him, but then I thought I must see him. It's a wonderful opportunity to have a chance to talk to him. I then asked for approval that I should have him brought to Delhi to come and see me. But the reply came, 'Not approved.'

"It was heartbreaking. The one chance of getting things moving, I'd been deprived of." And he said, "Of course, I know it's Winston* who'd personally intervened and stopped this. What can we do?"

I said, "Well, it's very, very simple, you first of all must realise that Winston hates you. He hates you because he did you wrong. He was the man who told you, when you were Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East and had done so well and gone right through, he told you then to take your forces and go to Greece, which you knew was militarily disastrous. It meant a defeat in Greece and also a defeat in Africa.

"He, having presented you with a military decision on political grounds, and having forced you to have two double defeats,

*Winston Churchill.

couldn't forgive you for this, so he got rid of you. And he also dislikes the idea of any advance in India because he has got a very emotional feeling about India; he was there as a young subaltern in the Fourth Hussars in 1897 or something of the sort. To him, India is Kipling, it's polo, it's soldiery, it's glamour, it's everything. He doesn't want to see that go away and he thinks, in some ways quite rightly, that India is happier under British Rule.

"Now, of course, he's right in one way. One-fifth of humanity lives in India. We the British couldn't hold India one single day more unless 99 per cent of the people were for us, that's obvious. Therefore he's right; but the one per cent who are against us are the literate people, the educated people, the leaders, and they've either got to be kept permanently shut up, with an ever increasing garrison to keep them down or, one day, we've got to fulfil the promises which were made twice over in the 1800s, and give them their independence.

"Now, Churchill wished to put back that day. He thought one of the ways by which he could put it back was that you're just the sort of person whom he can bully. Because you're so honourable, you carry out orders—and he's not going to let you do anything.

"Now I don't understand you," I said. "You are the Viceroy: the Viceroy is the greatest man, next to the King Emperor himself, and probably the most powerful. Much more powerful than the Prime Minister, really, because you've got the power of life and death! All you have to do is simply say, 'I've released Gandhi, I've summoned him to Delhi, I've had a fascinating conversation and this is the conversation.' "

"Winston would be furious!" he said.

"Of course he would, but can he sack you? No. Can he possibly object in a way that won't make him look stupid? No. **The only way to cope with Winston is to be up to his tricks and realise that he's not doing it from any honourable motives, he's doing it**

**because he doesn't want you to advance at all. So he will stultify you completely unless you really wake up and see what he is doing."**

Wavell thanked me very much, and I think that that's when his eyes were first opened to the fact that he had Winston against him.

Not only do I give you this as an example of Wavell's talks to me and of my giving him advice, but of course you can't talk to the Viceroy at a time when he's beset with every sort of political problem without taking an interest in them. It was fascinating. It mattered to me, too—after all, I had a million Indians under my command, and so I found myself, willy-nilly, learning about his problems in India.

So when I left, no person alive knew more about the problems he was facing than me. I hadn't been consciously thinking how I'd try to solve them—but I used to try and help him with advice.

Q. *Why did you want to get out to Delhi before Wavell left?*

A. Tradition had it that you could never have two Viceroys on the soil of India at the same moment. So in the early days one Viceroy left with great formality by sea from Bombay, the gateway to India, and the other one came in on the next steamer. They never met. So you never had the embarassing situation of having two Gods in the same country.

In this case I said, "I don't mind bowing to the Viceroy, deferring to him or what have you as long as I have 24 hours with him." So it was arranged for me to go out while Wavell was still there.

The evening of my arrival in Delhi, Wavell said to me, "I'm very, very sorry indeed that you've been sent out here in my place."

"Well, that's being candid. Why? Do you think I'm not up to it?"

He said, "No, I'm very fond of you. But you've been given an impossible task. There is no way of dealing with it. Not only have we had absolutely no help from Whitehall,* but we've reached a complete impasse here.

"And here," he said, "in my safe (which he opened) I have two things for you. I have the Viceroy's heirloom" (which was a rather extravagant jewel) and the other thing he had, was a file which was called "Operation Madhouse." This Operation was his plan for the withdrawal from India, province by province, women and children first, then the administration and finally, the Services.

"If things go on like this, there's going to be no other solution. We're going to have the most awful mess. It's a terrible solution, but that's all I can bequeath to you. And that," he said, "if you can find a way around that, you've got a miracle I haven't achieved. I'm very, very, very sorry."

I only mention it to show that Wavell did seek a solution. I might add that he was treated by London in a manner that was absolutely abominable.

But this is the fundamental explanation of a man who writes brilliantly, who had a first-class mind, very intelligent and very well-disposed, really progressive. Nothing wrong with Wavell at all, except this handicap which prevented him from being able to communicate. Unless people spoke up.

This is the explanation of why he failed, because he did fail. He failed sadly to get through. They didn't mistrust him—it wasn't that they mistrusted him—they didn't feel they could get anywhere with him.

**Q.** *Was he bitter about the way he'd been treated?*

*The British Secretariat.

**A.** Yes. Particularly bitter against Churchill. And rightly so. Churchill was an absolute—I mean, I can tell you here and now, that if Churchill had won the election—which I knew he wasn't going to because certainly the 14th Army was against him to a man, politically, not as a leader– if he'd won the election, we'd have got nowhere. He would have immediately stopped all the progressive things. He would have stopped me doing anything progressive in Malaya and Singapore, or in the French East Indies or in French Indo-China. He would have stopped all that.

I wouldn't have stayed. He'd either have kicked me out or I would have gone. But it was quite different with Attlee. Attlee really did see the point in trying to do these things.

Now this is only to set up the picture before I went out there. That's the position. Now—once more the point I want to make is that first of all they rumbled that they were going to try to get me out as Viceroy before they asked me. They started talking about it and they were surprised to find how clued up I was. They had no idea, you see, that I'd been talking to Wavell for a long time. I think they were pretty surprised to find—they consulted me about India like they used to consult me about Burma, a place I was responsible for.

**Q.** *Between the announcement of your appointment and your departure, did you see Churchill?*

**A.** Yes I did. First of all Pug Ismay who had been his Chief of Staff agreed to come out with me and saw quite a lot of him; and I went and saw him.

He said, "I'm sorry that you should perform this grievous duty," and he said, "I'm not going to tell you how to do it, but I'll tell you one thing—whatever arrangements you may make, you must see that you don't harm a hair on the head of a single Muslim."

I said, "I've no wish to harm the hair on anybody's head.

The Muslims are very largely my army companions. Of course I won't!"

"Yes, but they're the people who have been our friends, and they're the people the Hindus are now going to oppress, so you must take steps that they can't do it."

I said, "I quite agree."

"Very well."

The funny thing is that Winston later paid me a great tribute. It's important because it shows he later changed his mind. In July 1947, when the Transfer of Power had been arranged the *Times* of London carried this article: "Mr Attlee rose to make a statement in the House of Commons and the overheated atmosphere was charged with a sense of sharp expectancy. Mr. Attlee quickly drew an approving cheer for his opening annoucement that the offer of Dominion status has been favourably received by all three parties represented by the conference, and by the Viceroy. He continued to praise Lord Mountbatten for the great service he had performed. The spontaneous cheers were led by Mr Churchill who said that if the hopes that are enshrined in this declaration should be borne out, great recognition should be given, not only to the Viceroy, but to the Prime Minister who had the wisdom to make the appointment."

Q. *Churchill was reconciled to the coming of Indian independence?*

A. No. I don't think he was in any way reconciled. . . . When he said good-bye to Pug Ismay who, after all, had been his Chief of Staff during the war, a great friend, and had really saved his bacon—without Pug Ismay Winston couldn't have lasted—really all he said to him was, "Well, goodbye, Pug. You're a disgrace to Britain with this scuttle, scuttle, scuttle. I bet you've only done it to get another honour."

"Scuttle, scuttle, scuttle," that was all he said to Pug Ismay.

Q *Did you make a farewell call on the King?*

A. Yes. The King was extraordinary, all the way through. Of course, he was a very old friend of mine and I knew him very well. The King was absolutely sure that we were doing the right thing. He authorized me to tell the Princes that we would do everything we could for them, but they absolutely had to face up to the winds of change. He had almost ludicrous confidence in me, much more confidence than was justified, and was very keen.

He took a real interest. He was very, very good. He couldn't have been better.

Q. *Where was the farewell? In his office?*

A. At Buckingham Palace, in a sitting room.

Q. *In front of a portrait of Queen Victoria?*

A. I just don't know. You see at the present moment I go and see the Queen in *her* sitting room which is quite different.

Q. *Did he say anything touching, any phrase like Queen Victoria Empress of India for 1,000 years, etc?*

A. No, the only remark I can remember. . .he was sad about one thing. He said, "I've always wanted to come and see you in South-East Asia when you were fighting there, and to go to India. But you know the Prime Minister stopped me from going."

George VI was very keen to come out indeed and he said, "Now, I'm afraid, I shall not be able to go out."

I said, "I don't know." And he said, "It's sad. I've been crowned Emperor of India without ever going to India. And now I am going to lose this title right here."

**Q.** *In the period between your first conversation with Attlee, and your departure, you talked with Stafford Cripps. What did he have to say about Gandhi?*

**A.** He gave me a run-down on everybody, all the way through. Nehru I already knew, but he told me more about him, he told me quite a lot about Jinnah. He told me a bit of what he thought about Patel, a bit of what he thought about Gandhi, and I think he had them more or less right, all of them.

He was pretty shrewd. He had one thing wrong about Gandhi. He thought that Gandhi held the answer to everything—and he held only one answer. He could destroy, but couldn't create.

**Q.** *What did Wavell tell you about Nehru?*

**A.** Oh, that he had great charm. He said, "He's got great charm—a very likeable person to work with, but you'll find it very, very difficult because he's very clever: he's full of idealistic ideas which may or may not work, he has no political experience whatsoever. And you have to try to explain to him—which I'm very bad at—what are the consequences of something like this. He tried to destroy the Indian Army by stopping by quashing the court martial of the Indian National Army—and if he does, I can tell you, we know, you and I, that the Commander-in-Chief will resign, the British will resign. There'll be no Army left if we do that. They can't take that and Nehru can't see it."

**Q.** *About Gandhi?*

**A.** About Gandhi, he said he was the most lovely person—absolutely in the clouds—purely idealistic. He would appear to have no practical solution whatever, except that he does have this tremendous thing with the fast. If he wants something to be done, he'll do a fast. And provided you can make sure that

the only fasts he does are for worthwhile objects, that's to the good.

Q. *And Jinnah?*

A. Oh, he said, absolutely hopeless. He explained this to me. He said. "Don't forget this about Jinnah: he is a pure Englishman by education, by outlook and by affection. He speaks English and, as far as I know, talks no other dialect of any sort.

"Jinnah was at least 60, I think, before he started taking an interest in politics—came to it very late in life and he came in at a very critical moment, because" (I remember his saying this, and I think he was absolutely right) "in 1938 they had elections after the Government of India Act of 1935. In these elections, they put up the popular locally elected governments in various provinces. And in every province, of course the Congress Party won the election. The Muslim League went to the wall."

Instead of having enough sense to have coalition governments, and bringing the Muslim League in (and even at the worst if they didn't do that, they should have gone out of their way to give the Muslims the best possible treatment) they in fact didn't allow them in anywhere and oppressed them. So that convinced the Muslim League that was the kind of treatment they'd in fact get if they didn't try and stand out for independence.

The Muslim League stood out for independence although the Muslims were spread all over India. They could only really claim to take in two provinces. Jinnah's great idea, of course, was to take the whole of the Punjab, the whole of Bengal and just take it with millions of Hindus, which would have been alright if you were going to head them right. But they said they wouldn't trust him.

Q. *So, to sum up what were the personal feelings you took with you to India?*

A. One thing you've got to realise, which is for better or worse. I'm an extravert and I talk very glibly. I repeat: I've always loved India. I went out there with this enormous affection. Remember that I'd been there of a very impressionable day, I'd got engaged to my wife out there. You must be convinced of one thing: I loved the Indians. My family loved Indians. That was a true and honest to God affection. I thought their Army were marvellous, I had so many friends among the Indians. It was not difficult to be real friends. Whereas, I don't know about Wavell. I don't think Linlithgow liked the Indians.

The trouble is, you can't deceive these people. They knew right away whether you really liked them or whether you were putting up a show. We actually liked them, and liked them very much. We felt very emotionally bound to them.

You see, with Wavell, and even more with Linlithgow, there was security everywhere. When Wavell played golf, the golf course was cleared and the police had men down every 50 yards on each side. Whenever the Viceroy travelled by train, every 100 yards along the line, there was a man guarding him. He only went on announced routes, police out, cars front and behind, wherever you went. I was going to change all that. Wherever we went, the crowds who previously, at least, were absent—they may not have been unfriendly, but they were absent—gathered in enormous numbers. One day Nehru said, "You know, you're a very difficult person to negotiate with now. I'm informed that you get bigger crowds than Gandhiji and myself."

I said, "Yes, I believe that's true."

He said, "It's basically awkward to negotiate with somebody who has a larger following than you do."

Now I can't account for that. Our Hindi or Urdu was bad. I made very few public announcements, speeches. It's true the army had taken a liking to me and passed back the news. It's true we obviously liked the people.

A man like Linlithgow couldn't bear the Indians. He was

always perfectly correct, but never had any warmth for anybody whether he liked them or not. He had no emotions.

We came out and it changed. That's what really did the trick. They could not afford to bypass my own role because I could go out and get as much of a following for what *I* was going to say as for what *they* were going to say. It put me in a strong position.

Q. *You left England for Delhi on March 22, 1947. What sort of feeling did you have flying over the huge continent of India? Awe?*

A. Don't forget, I'd spent the last two and a half years out there, flying all around. So it wasn't quite awe. The difference now was that instead of being a military commander, I was going to be Head of State, in a peculiar way, the executive head of a state. I also knew that it was going to be a very much more difficult job than the war. The war was difficult enough, because it was such a mess, but it was straightforward, just fighting the Japanese.

Here I was going to rely entirely on my wits. I must explain this. I had to make up my mind how to handle the discussions. I was absolutely certain that it could only be done *tete-a-tete.* I never had more than one person in the room. I never let them stay for more than an hour. If we hadn't finished I said, well, I'll see you again.

I spent my first days breaking the ice with Gandhi and Jinnah and so forth—talking to them about their lives and the early days. I established a sort of rapport, so that when they came in it was a continuing dialogue. We sort of carried on where we'd left off.

I mention all this because you've got to explain in your book,* if you want to be historically accurate, the methods I used, my

*Collins and Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, (New Delhi, Vikas, 1976).

hunches with the situation. But I claim it is not just intuition or hunches. I claim it is basically deep, profound study of the psychology of my Indian partners. Wavell never tried to get hold of the Indians, like V.P. Menon;* V.P. Menon was never allowed to go near him. He was on Wavell's staff, but Wavell never saw him. Menon said, "I never saw the Viceroy; I wasn't asked for my opinions."

All the meetings that took place with me were what I call round-table meetings; every single thing I did in India was the exact opposite of what people thought it was going to be. And most people prophesied dire results. The only bad luck I had was that I arrived out so late that nothing I could do, could stop this trouble over the migrations. That, I'm blamed for. But I maintain that if I'd waited longer, what would have happened? The Indian Government would have blown up, I would then have had to go under Section 93,† and how could I, the Viceroy, governing India under direct rule, hope to transfer power?

You see, I happened to have a particular philosophy about the background against which I made my decisions in India. As Supreme Commander I never thought less than a year or two ahead. When I went to India I told myself: I'm going to take my decisions looking ten years ahead. All my decisions are going to be governed by what it will read like when history is written ten or fifteen years ahead. I don't care about what people say now.

*V.P. Menon, Reforms Commissioner to the Viceroy, and from July 1947, Secretary of the States Department, Government of India. (Also referred to as Rao Bahadur Menon.)

†Section 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935 enabled the Governor of a Province, if "satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the governance of a province cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Act", to issue with the concurrence of the Governor-General, a proclamation assuming all the powers of the Provincial Government.

I am working for the history my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren will read. This makes one impervious to short-term criticism.

Q. *The single most glorious event which marked your destiny has probably been the great Durbar ceremony held in the Durbar Hall of Viceroy's House on March 24, 1947 when you and Edwina were officially installed as Viceroy and Vicereine of India, a continent where one-fifth of mankind lived. Can you recall some instances of this memorable day?*

A. Of course! I can remember every second of it. What a ceremony! Everyone who mattered was there. All the Princes, all the leaders, all the diplomats.

The ceremonial was almost unbelievable. There were three guards of honour of 100 men each drawn up outside; and one knew they were repeated a thousand times over all across India. A battery of Royal Horse Artillery guns, massed bands, the bodyguard lines all the way, the bodyguard trumpeters in the upper reaches of the hall and this tremendous fanfare as we came in. This long procession of which we were the last.

I put on everything. My white full dress uniform. Orders, decorations, medals, the whole lot. The night before, Wavell gave me the Viceroy's heirloom jewel in diamonds. I wore it around my neck that day. Obviously, I wore the Garter. Then I wore the Star of India, I was the Grand Master of the Order, I wore the Star of the Indian Empire, and then I wore the Victorian Order and that made the four, that's all you're allowed to wear. And I wore the aiguillettes as personal ADC to the King Emperor. In rank, I was down to Rear Admiral.

My wife was dressed up in an evening dress with tiara and decorations. She looked absolutely smashing. She really could dress up. At that time she had the Dame Commander of the

Victorian Order. She had the Grand Cross of the St. John Order which is a sash. Then she had the Crown of India. It's the highest women's order in the world except the Garter which is only worn by the Queen. It ranks for women higher than anything else. And she had the Star of the Victorian Order. She was then 45, I was 46, and she had the most perfect figure, really perfect and looked tremendous. And of course one goes on with all this panoply, one is preceded with, God knows, 20 of one's own staff in full dress, so it was quite a moment, the whole thing.

Before we left for Durbar Hall, she had come into my room, all dressed up. It was a very curious consummation to be the Viceroy and Vicereine having got engaged out there. Now I do remember, I was just finishing off dressing because we were actually living in what's called the Reading Rooms; a little later we went up to the Viceroy's room, and my valet, Charles, was still fussing around with me. She was very careful to always be dressed in good time, never late. She stood there, framed in the doorway, looking absolutely smashing. She really was, you know, terrific.

Lady Wavell looked exactly like my wife's maid. She was very, sort of mundane. And people out there were enormously struck by the difference—you see, the Wavells didn't like a lot of ceremony while I and my wife have always liked it. So we went in with a form of panache which was entirely lacking before. It started the whole thing off in such a way, it struck a new note from the beginning.

The feeling was one of astonishing uplift. Whereas previously I had been—apprehensive is too strong a word—I had realised I was in for a most frightful time. Coming back from Durbar Hall I suddenly felt as though this was the endowment. It was . . . one had an immense feeling that this was it, this was being endowed with an almost heavenly power. I realized I had been made into the most powerful man on earth. One-fifth of huma-

nity I held in my hand. A power of life and death. And with it all there was not only a tremendous feeling of respect and awe, there was a sense of friendship. All the people seemed to be pleased to see us.

I was well aware of my whole background (my Victoria blood ties) and I was well aware of what was going on. Mind you, I do want to point out, I had had other astonishing experiences. To step out into City Hall of Singapore where we British had been submitted to abject humiliation and take the surrender of three-quarter of a million Japanese in public, it was quite an experience, you know.

There, in Durbar Hall, came that great moment when one says, "I solemnly swear . . ." And as you put the book down, off goes the first gun. Thirty-one guns while garrisons all over India at the same time presented arms, and they all played *God Save the King*. The whole thing was charged to the nth degree with emotion. The very fanfare resounding around this great dome as we came in. And India is a land of ceremonial splendour. And it was at its absolute heights there. It was a very great moment.

Q. *Why did you make that speech at the Durbar ceremony? Any particular reason for the timing?*

A. Well, I was convinced people didn't realize I had come out to do something quite differently. I thought: How can I get it across? I didn't want to go on All-India Radio and make a speech. I didn't want to give a press conference. And I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't give a speech from the throne itself. The difference between the King's speech from the throne and the Viceroy's is that the King's is written by someone else and I wrote mine myself. And it had an astonishing effect because of the mere fact one had broken with a long tradition: the mere fact that the Viceroy had come out and declared his

policy within one minute of becoming Viceroy. . . . I had become Viceroy just one minute before speaking. I put the book down and I turned around and said, "Now this is what I'm going to do." It was really pretty cheeky; it was really a bit of an impertinence.

Q. *You must have sensed an extraordinary tension in India from the moment you arrived . . .*

A. It's difficult to imagine how exciting and agonizing the situation was all the time. I've been through wars and all that, but these worries and agonies were nothing compared to living with a sword over your head at Viceroy's House all the time.

Fortunately, I thrive on that sort of thing I was never in better form, more gay, excited. That, I think, puzzled people. The worse the situation got, the more excited I got at the challenge. And I was excited, it was the most exciting period of my life.

I mention this because I believe if people wonder why I was able to do it, it was because I never, never, never worried. I felt I was doing my best. There was nothing more I could do. The riots and migrations and troubles—what I did was immediately to set up a proper war room, maps, take charge, run the thing; but I wasn't worried about it.

Nobody, absolutely nobody, had given me any warning. Everybody was caught by surprise. I was deeply concerned, but not worried. The war was comparatively easy compared to India. It was a great test. If I hadn't been young, and had good health and stamina, it would have been difficult to do.*

*When Ismay asked to leave India at the end of 1947, he told Mountbatten, "Seven months in India with you have been more tiring than seven years in the war with Winston."

Q. *What sort of modus operandi did you adopt?*

A. Well, I insisted on seeing people entirely alone. It's a fatal error to have another person in the room. I alone, then, knew what happened. But I had a big staff out there to help me and in order that they might know what I was doing, as soon as people went out, a secretary would pop in and I'd dictate a summary of what had gone on. I had a very bright memory in those days—it was possible for me to recall exactly what happened, even the day after.

In the evening, after it was all typed up, we had a round-up of the day's events. The notes, of course, turned out to be unique. Nobody has ever kept hundreds and hundreds of notes taken at the time and they will have, as you will find, the absolutely real and unvarnished version. They can't be wrong as they occurred immediately after. But sometimes I deliberately omitted things: like my flare-up with Patel.* Because I liked the old boy, I knew I would turn my staff against him if I wasn't careful, so I made separate notes on my first meetings with him.

Q. *How did you develop the technique?*

A. Oh, it was something I developed only for speed. I brought out with me the most high-class team I could find. They were absolutely tops. As Wavell's team was also frightfully good, I combined them. I wanted to make use of their knowledge and their brains.

Among my closest collaborators was Ian Scott,† who's still alive and who will give you the Muslim side since he's practically

*Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Member of Home Affairs and for Information and Broadcasting, and from July 1947, Member for States in the Interim Government. He was later Deputy Prime Minister of India.

†I. D, Scott, Deputy Secretary to the Viceroy (DPSV).

a Muslim himself. I had V.P. Menon who was of course, my Hindu advisor. I had plenty of people to take representative views. But, ultimately, I had to do it entirely alone, I had to sit there alone.

Nobody ever sat there taking notes. So, first, I had to remember what had gone on for my own sake, as it were. But I had to tell my boys what was going on, so they could give me advice, advice which I might or might not take, but at least I'd know what they thought. So it was fortuitous for posterity. Every single move brings back a scene. I dictated these notes immediately after my visitors went out. I never had a bit of paper in front of me.

Each of them wanted to say what they wanted to hear. The very first day Jinnah came in with his demands. I said, "Mr. Jinnah, I don't want to talk business. This is just to get to know you. Tell me about your early life and so forth and so on." Gandhi, the same thing. He came to me but I said, "My dear, I'm not interested in politics right now. Tell me about what happened in South Africa. Why did you have such trouble in India" and all the rest of it. Well, bit by bit, having got them to talk just for the sake of talking at this first stage, slowly we came on to build up what was going to be the plan.

Q. *Apart from your first talks with the Indian leaders, how important was it to have the Governors working with you, and what recalcitrance did you encounter in your dealings with them?*

A. Very good question. Have you seen the Minutes of the Governors' Conference? No? If you want them, we'll look them up. And even as important, the Residents' Conference, for the Princes. When you visit the Viceroy's House, you'll find that it is so constructed that I was able to invite the 11 Governors—each with their wives, their Private Secretaries, their ADCs, etc. Many of them had their own dining-rooms and sitting-rooms:

the house was so divided, it was like a great big hotel. It was a tricky situation because, for the first time, these Governors had a Viceroy who was very much younger than them, who had no experience as a statesman. I mean, most of the other Viceroys came with long records in Parliament and public administration. I'd been a Supreme Commander, it's true, but that was not at all the same thing, and therefore it was a pretty awkward situation, because it was quite clear I'd come out to make up my own mind. I first had to win them over, get them to come with me, and I did that by flattering them and saying, "Now I wanted to get you here as soon as possible because I know I can get nowhere without your advice and help. Unless you give me guidelines, and tell me how you think and how I should proceed." You see?

The whole line I made was to play up to them. And they were agreeably surprised to find that I'd come to ask them instead of to tell them. And what they didn't know, of course, was that I'd spend the first day asking, and the second day telling them. And my wife did a marvellous job with all the wives; and I got them to tell me the situation in each of their provinces.

Now, what is difficult to realize... Just take old Fred Burrows.* You do realize. . . . I'm not so sure he wasn't ill at that time. Bengal had a population greater than that of the whole of the United Kingdom. The monumental size of all things was so staggering. Each had their own particular, separate problems. I listened at great length as they poured out all their troubles and I became their letter-box.

Gradually, they came round, gradually the flattery worked, they felt they were going to be asked, they all had lots of views. They had a consensus of opinion, which I detected. They were madly keen to have no partition but couldn't give me any suggestion on how to avoid it.

*Sir Frederick Burrows, last British Governor of Bengal.

**Q.** *Did you have a round table conversation with them?*

**A.** I had them round a table, with Lord Ismay. I think I had the Secretary, Sir George Abell* with me, and we sat and talked.

**Q.** *Was there a sort of coolness at the beginning?*

**A.** Not so much coolness, my God, they weren't cool, they were excited. I don't know what the word is. There was tension in the atmosphere. What was going to happen. . . . They'd had so little information at that time and I think they were greatly surprised that they were going to be allowed a say, not only on the state in their particular province, but they were going to be allowed to give advice on how to handle that province. And they all got it off their chests. They all felt strongly about the thing. I think the first day, I did nothing but just listen.

**Q.** *Did they speak one after another?*

**A.** From memory, I asked each one to speak in turn, in order of their importance. The three great Presidencies—Bengal, Bombay, Madras – went first, then came the provinces. And everybody spoke. Don't forget, we had one or two Indian Governors too, we had Chandulal Trivedi,† we had Akbar Hydari‡ from Assam, so it was not an all-British conference in any sense at all—in fact the Indian Governors were more, so to speak, right-wing than the British Governors, who were much more forthcoming.

First they gave me an account of the state of affairs in their

*G.E.B. (later Sir George) Abell, Private Secretary to the Viceroy (PSV).

†Sir Chandulal Trivedi, Governor of Orissa, and from August 15, 1947, first Indian Governor of Punjab.

‡Sir Akbar Hydari, Member for Information and Broadcasting, Viceroy's Executive Council, 1945 to 1946.

province, and the problems they had to face. The next thing I asked them was what they thought should be the solution I should aim at and how this would affect their own province. Then when I broke the news to them that they would almost certainly. . . I mean, that we were unlikely to be able to escape partition, and that partition would have to be imposed in Punjab & Bengal, they really nearly passed out. Evan Jenkins* and Tyson† said, "You can't go and submit us to partition!" They reminded me, in the case of Bengal, that Lord Curzon‡ had partitioned Bengal and it hadn't worked and he had to go back on it, and there were tremendous arguments about whether Calcutta should be a free city because it was such an enormous city that nobody could stop massacres and all that sort of thing.

But none of the Governors visualized any of the migrations or massacres. Nobody had any conception of the scale. I mean, they thought there might be some troubles with it, but nothing on the scale we actually encountered. There was no warning at all. In fact, when I set up the Punjab Boundary Force, which I did very nearly personally—after all, the whole army had fought under me—I knew every general and every senior officer. I picked General Rees who commanded the 19th Indian Division, to command the Boundary Force, a marvellous little man. We picked the units that were absolutely steady, non-communal. We had a lot of Gurkhas, who were absolutely non-communal. We had a lot of mixed regiments, as far as possible, which still had British commanding officers, brigades with British brigadiers, and so forth. One of the colonels commanding a battalion was called Ayub Khan, who afterwards became President of Pakistan.

Harking back to the Governors' Conference, it was the atmos-

*Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of Punjab till August 15, 1947.

†John Rawson Tyson, ICS, Secretary to the Governor of Bengal from 1945.

‡Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905.

phere. And of course the lunch, and the dinner, and then the general talks, and the social talks, and the getting together. I think they were agreeably surprised. We did it much better than the Wavells, I mean, really laid on everything, we went to town. Don't forget. . . . If you really want a funny postscript, you will see in Peter Howes* book, that, in very round figures, the Viceregal establishment cost the Government of India a quarter of a million pounds a year, which was very cheap at the price. I mean, we replaced many thousands of administrators. And the point really is, that we were determined to bring Indians into the Viceroy's House who had either never been asked, or who would never even have dreamt of accepting if they had been asked. And you'll see in Campbell-Johnson's book,† tucked away in a footnote, that we entertained, from memory, 15,000 to dinner and 12,000 to lunch, 45,000 people, something of that sort.

This cost an awful lot of money. And the salary of the Viceroy had not been increased with inflation. Food was expensive in India. But we did it, regardless. We had the best wines, the best food, marvellously laid on. We had the fullest possible complement of servants and we had this very big staff. Don't forget, I had with me, not only a staff twice the size of Wavell's staff, but for the first time, I had Indian ADCs, which no Viceroy had before.

**Q.** *Psychologically, this must have scored a point with the Indians?*

**A.** Oh yes. . . . Then when I met all my staff—there were great crowds and I shook them all by the hand—I think I met many more than were obviously going to be in my close circle, and nobody, but nobody, thought of telling me that V.P. Menon

*Lieutenant-Commander Peter Howes, Senior ADC to Lord Mountbatten.
†*Mission with Mountbatten.*

ought to be in the close circle. He was high enough up in the hierarchy to be there. But George Abell never suggested I should invite him, nobody even suggested he should come to me. One day I went through my staff and I said, "This chap, V.P. Menon, I haven't met him since I shook hands with him. I want to see him."

V.P. Menon was intensely surprised to find the Viceroy was actually going to see him. And in that one morning's talk with him, I realized that here was the man I could work with. This was a man who was a genuine, intelligent Indian, of the people, who could put forward things that would be acceptable. I discovered he had a personal link with Patel (but not with Nehru) and I then started using him, but, at first, almost secretly.

Then I started making him come to the staff meetings, bit by bit, but even then, I didn't let him hold forth at any of the staff meetings. I always used to insist on seeing him alone and picking his brains, in order to utilize his ideas as though they were from me—because they were much more acceptable to the rest of my staff if I put up the ideas; I wasn't trying to cash in on them. And he was very keen that I should be the person who put up these ideas, but I'm not going to pretend I wasn't influenced. **My tribute to V.P. Menon: I was very greatly influenced in my own negotiation development by his ideas.**

Many people will tell you he had no influence at all, and V.P. Menon thinks he had more influence than he did have. The truth is, of course, he had access to me and he influenced me very greatly.

Q. *Didn't you feel also that he was important because of his link with Patel?*

A. Absolutely right.

Q. *Did you have a comparable link to Nehru?*

A. My unofficial link with Nehru was Krishna Menon, whom I made friends with in England. We've remained friends. A very curious creature. I must tell you—you won't want this for your book, but it'll help you to understand—Menon did the most frightful thing to Nehru; because Krishna Menon, who was Minister of Defence, actually got this invasion of Goa linked up without Nehru understanding or knowing about it, and then faced him almost with a *fait accompli*, and he had to approve or else be held up as the man who was going against popular clamour. And so they had the invasion of Goa, and in doing so, he destroyed Nehru. Nehru was the great idealist, who had always said that force must never, never be used. If the people of Goa wanted to stay with the Portuguese, they couldn't be forced, and in forcing Nehru to bless the invasion of Goa he destroyed him, not only his credibility, his prestige, his reputation, but he destroyed his faith in himself, for he felt that he had been betrayed. And he later killed him with the disastrous Chinese war.

Q. *What was your assessment of the Indian leaders?*

A. I knew that five mattered really: Nehru, Gandhi, Patel, Liaquat Ali Khan and Jinnah. It was very curious. They all had five qualities in common.

First, every one of them was well past middle age and they'd spent their lives arguing with each other.

Second, they were all well versed in the arts of agitation, dedicated to independence, and they had absolutely no idea of administration, whatsoever.

Third, they were all lawyers. They'd all eaten their dinners at the Inns of Court in England, and they were nearly all well versed in British constitutional law.

Fourth, what we were about to do with independence, which was absolutely new to me, was to them merely the culmination

of a lifetime's effort.

And fifth, they all had their own human lives completely submerged in their political action. One didn't know what their backgrounds were, at least I didn't.

And so when they came, I was determined first to break the ice, get to know them. With Patel I had great difficulty in getting through—but I got them to tell me about each other. They all wanted to come and tell me what they wanted. They were determined to get at me with propaganda. But I just wouldn't listen. I said, "I don't want your propaganda. Don't tell me what you think I ought to do! I want to know about your life."

You see, Gandhi and Nehru and Patel had all been used to working with English Viceroys and Governors. Yet each of them told me at different times that they had found it entirely and completely different working with me to any other Englishman they'd ever met or had dealings with. A complete change of approach they said, an open-mindedness. They felt I was trying to see what they wanted done and to see if I could do it.

Q. *Did you and Gandhi ever discuss non-violence?*

A. When he did, I had no hesitation whatsoever in having him. It was my decision buried by the services. We discussed both non-violence and the services and he said what he admired about the services was their discipline. "What we lack in our movement is adequate discipline. Non-violence has to be a highly disciplined thing because you've got to put up in the face of provocation and being beaten up, you've got to be non-violent. We have this in common. You have complete discipline; if you tell your services to kill people, they certainly will; they'll also try and keep order and peace. You don't decide to go and kill people. This decision is made by governments that you serve. I wouldn't personally join a service in which I might be ordered to kill a person because if I was ordered to,

I wouldn't.

On the other hand, it is not possible to run a country without discipline. I would be the last person to suggest we should abandon our army, navy, air force. This is not part of non-violence. Non-violence is a method of obtaining political results without bloodshed."

It wasn't that he felt there could be no violence in the world. He said, "I think you were right to stand up to the Nazis, the fascists. And if you hadn't we should now be in a very poor position." He was quite sensible, quite realistic about it. And certainly it didn't come between us in any way whatsoever. Gandhi, unfortunately, had nothing to contribute to finding a solution. His only contribution was to tell me, quite early on, that whatever happened, I mustn't *dream* of partitioning India.

I said it was the last thing I wanted to do – I mean the one great legacy we can leave to the subcontinent, is this unification. But, I said, if in fact there is no common meeting ground between the Muslim League and the Congress Party, and they won't settle down – and if Jinnah has now reached the point where the Muslim League are prepared to fight—and don't forget Direct Action Day in Calcutta which was a warning of what he could do (August 1946)—I mean he killed 5,000 people and wounded 15,000 people just as demonstration, and I think he has the capacity to cause civil war if we don't meet him halfway.

"Yes", said Gandhi, "I agree. Therefore, you must say to Jinnah Sahib—I will transfer power to you, I'll ask you to be Prime Minister, I'll ask you to form a government to run a unified India."

I said, "How fascinating. I'm really fascinated by the ingeniousness of the idea, but what makes you think the Congress Party will accept it?"

He said, "The Congress Party above all, want to avoid partition which they think would be a disaster. They think one of the

greatest single blessings the British brought was to unify the country. It's unique. Therefore, this is a very high prize and I think they will accept. Jinnah won't be able to do very much because in effect you can't coerce a majority population merely by executive acts at the centre and he'd have less power than he will think he's going to get."

I said, "I'll tell you something, Gandhiji, he'll think he's not going to get power at all. He'll think there's something bogus in it."

"No, we can convince him that we're quite honest."

I said, "Well the only way you can convince him that you're being quite honest is to go to the Congress Party. You are to convince them, and furthermore you are to convince them that this is an honest thing and they've got to play ball with it."

"Yes", he said, "I'll see Panditji and the others and I'll talk to them."

Q. *To what degree did his idea appeal to you?*

A. Let me put it another way around. I was scratching at any straw to avoid partition. This was a means of avoiding partition. I also knew it wasn't a runner unless the Congress Party actually went along with it and went along with it, honestly. I mean it was no good my saying to Jinnah have your government, a Muslim majority government, and then finding Congress had no intention of making it work. If, on the other hand, Jinnah thought the Congress Party were honestly prepared to make it work—all he was interested in was power—and protect the Muslims, he could have had all that. But I was convinced Congress would not agree. If people were like Gandhiji and had that peculiar sort of ethics, it might have worked. But it obviously wasn't going to work.

So, I didn't argue against it or anything like that. I remember saying, "What a brilliant solution. how clever of you, and so

forth." I was intrigued immensely by his puckish, extraordinary approach and I let him wrangle with the others.

Q. *How did Gandhi present you his plan? Did you sense it might be his last throw of the dice?*

A. If I remember rightly, he did not come in waving a paper, "I've got a new plan." I think he asked me if I had any solution in mind. My memory is that we got to it by coming after I explained what difficulty I was having in finding a solution. That introduced it. He said, "Send for Jinnah, get him to form a government, then there'll be a strong centre and that will be accepted everywhere. The Muslims will accept and they're the people who are trying to break away. They've got to be appeased."

I said, "What about Congress?" He said, "Well, if Kripalani* and Patel and Nehru and I agree with this, it will work." Then I did say, "I think it's a brilliant idea, I'm terribly intrigued by it, will you put it to them?"

"No", he said, "I'd like you to."

"Ah, no," I said, "that I won't do. I'm not going to put it because it's a difficult idea to put over. They might accept it out of love and affection for you. They have not yet developed any love and affection for me, and I don't propose to risk my own position by putting up a scheme which they're going to say 'no' to. Furthermore, they're much more likely to say 'no' to me than to you."

To be quite honest, I knew it was such a non-starter that it would have lowered my prestige if I had put it up. But I was all for his putting it up because it showed that one was trying to find a solution.

You see it would have worked in my opinion if it had gone

*Acharya J.B. Kripalani, President of the Congress Party.

along the way that Gandhi had wanted it to work. Jinnah would have had the apparent power, the Muslims would have been safe, nothing would have overcome the fact that the vast majority of the population was Hindu. But you see Gandhi hadn't thought it out at all clearly, in my opinion. What was the safeguard? What if they all went in general strike against the government? What would they do? These are the things he hadn't thought out.

He was sad, if I recall correctly, that I wouldn't send for Kripalani and Nehru and Patel and tell them they ought to do it. My main reason for not doing it was that I thought if the very first proposal I put up, even if it came from Gandhi, they said no to, they'd be saying no to one of *my* proposals. I didn't want to be put in that position.

This upset him very much because he realized he was unlikely to get it through to them and he thought I was a better bet. I didn't think I was. It was basically a non-starter.

Q. *What was Jinnah's reaction to it?*

A. He never showed much reaction to any idea when you spoke to him, but I sensed he was absolutely astonished. At once he said, his reaction was one of almost incredulity, he said, "He'll never get it past the C.P."

When Gandhi came back from the Congress Party he said, "You know, you're the only sensible man in India. None of the others could see the point except you." That was one of the reasons why he thought I was such a hell of a chap.

It was absolute moonshine—I mean, this is the level of his political advice, absolutely nonsensical—but he had enormous charm and enormous influence. You know, he was very honourable. I can remember very well (I'm darting about but this is interesting) that when the trouble arose over Kashmir, and when the Congress Party were absolutely furious with Pakistan—I

think it was after Kashmir, but it was certainly over some great incident—they froze the assets of Pakistan, which they had not yet transferred. Now we had decided which of the sterling balances were to go to Pakistan they held on to them.

I got hold of Patel who simply wouldn't hear of it. I then got hold of Nehru, who saw the point, but he said. "I can't move the others, they won't . . . You'll never get the money past."

And I said, "All right. I will."

"How?" he said.

"I'm not going to tell you," I said.

So I then sent for Gandhi and I told him, "Now, you are going to lend your name to a permanent piece of sheer dishonesty. By pure coincidence they happen to have, in Delhi, the actual physical balances belonging to Pakistan. Are you going to agree to this? Rob them of a hundred million, or several hundred million, pounds?"

"No," he said.

I said, "How are you going to do it?"

He said, "I shall fast to death until they give the balances over."

And I got up and shook him by the hand, and said, "I congratulate you."

And they were terribly upset that he'd agreed to this—terribly upset that he'd done it with me and not with them. And he got them absolutely by the short hairs; they had to give up. Now that was courage; he was prepared to fast to death. He *knew* it was a dishonourable act.

My point is, I utilized Gandhi whose power was immense, to force him to force the Government of India to dispose of these sterling balances, without which they would have been regarded as scoundrels. I, in fact, as the Constitutional Governor-General felt myself in a position to try and make the Indian Government behave in a way that would stand up in history—as a states-

manlike, very adult way of behaving, and I think I succeeded. But you see I used tactics like getting Gandhi to fast and kicking Patel to sign. But it did succeed.

Q. *In a different vein, had your concept of a time limit something to do with your experience as Supreme Commander in South East Asia.*

A. Well, either (as far as I can remember and it's difficult to remember, you see—don't forget it was a snap decision) first, I didn't want the job, and I thought the idea of the time limit would be generally rather unwelcome (which it was), it might make it more easy for me to refuse if they wouldn't do it.

Secondly, if they did accept, it would be the only way it could be made to work. Come to think of it, it was not very clever. Everyone else had failed. Why? Because of the fact that, the people who did the negotiations—either they did the negotiations in London, which of course would never work, or they sent out a Cabinet mission from London, which proved a failure.

The Viceroy himself was never allowed to negotiate with any sort of authority, as you know, it all had to be referred back, and it was always open-ended. Nobody cared if you got an answer, you just went on as you were.

Now I wasn't prepared to sit there for five years, twiddling my thumbs. I felt, therefore, very strongly on this. I did feel, two hours later, that we had advanced a position from which it was possible to negotiate. I think the time limit was fundamental. I believe if I'd gone out without a time limit, I'd still be there. I don't think it was very clever, it was very obvious—but you see it was never done before because people didn't want to transfer power before. We'd reached the stage now where they had to transfer power for two reasons. One is that Attlee and the Labour Party belonged to the people who believed in inde-

pendent rule in the Commonwealth—sincerely, because it came from their ideology. They had to.

Second, because we didn't have the means to administer India any longer. The miracle of India was the extraordinarily efficient British administration. We administered it because we had the Indian Civil Service, which was the most efficient service in the world. Everybody tried to get into it. All the people in it were extremely high-class. It was very small, I think there were 1,200-1,500 people to control a fifth of humanity. They were completety trusted and they were completely honourable. They were well-paid and they had great emoluments. They hadn't got to try and be "on the make" in any way, and they ran India by the means of benevolent autocracy through the Viceroy, which was the most efficient and best way of doing it. I repeat that I think you've got to get this into your book.* The people of India—I haven't got the statistics but it must be over 99 per cent—were absolutely satisfied with the way they were ruled. That's the point. They *loved* it—no doubt about that at all. The minute articulate minority were the people we'd brought up ourselves. They had seen the point, which was why should the occupying power be allowed to run their nation?

Now, when I argue with some of my English friends who can't see the point, I say, "Look. Supposing the Germans had invaded England and occupied us, and we had them here. We would probably be more efficiently administered than we are now—we certainly would not have all this trouble with trade unions and everything of that sort, but we'd still rather run ourselves than have Germans running us. It's as simple as that."

**Q.** *The first Indian leader to challenge your authority was Vallabhbhai Patel. Can you recall why?*

* *Freedom at Midnight.*

A. I didn't record all of it (in his notes) because I didn't want to damage Patel with my staff. What happened was this. He'd been very rude to me. He'd written me a very rude minute. He demanded this and that. I said I wanted him to withdraw the minute and he said he wouldn't.

Then I said, "Very well. I'm just going to tell you what I'll do I'm going to order my airplane."

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to fly home. I'm not going to stay here. I didn't want this job in the first place, and you've been very kind. You've given me the most marvellous let-out. I've just been looking for someone like you to give me an excuse to throw up this impossible job and get out of it."

"What do you mean?" asked Patel.

"You don't think I'm going to stay here and be pushed around by a chap like you, do you? I'm the Viceroy and you're a little upstart. If you think you can be rude to me and push me around, you're wrong. I'm not going to stay. What I will do, of course, I'll have to explain to your Prime Minister and President of Congress, that the reason I'm going is you. I shall tell His Majesty's Government it's you. I'll tell Jinnah it's you. It's you who refuse your cooperation, refuse to work with me and the breakdown in India which will follow, the bloodshed, will be down to V. Patel and no one else."

He said, "The awful part is I think you mean it."

I said, "You're dead right I do."

He took the paper and tore it up. He was the great bully and I recognized that. There's only one way to treat a bully. Hit him hard, as hard as you can. After that we became great friends.

I wasn't bluffing. I was prepared to go. I had done the same with Auchinleck* in SEAC. I said the same thing, I'm going

*Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief in India

home. I'm going to tell Winston it's impossible to retain this command when you deny me the means of increasing my lines of communication.

The point is this: you can't threaten something you don't intend to do. The situation at the time was much more difficult than I'd ever dreamt when I went out. It would have been great to be given a let-out by the great party boss.

Patel was a much older man than Nehru and knew he hadn't many years to live, and he had to have power transferred more quickly than Nehru required it. I recognized that. But we became the most astonishing friends. It was very touching. I really loved him. He just had to find out who was the boss. He never tried it again.

Gandhi came in a loincloth. And as Delhi heated up, I had air conditioning and kept the study down to about 70 and my wife used to come in with the temperature 110 outside and shut off the air conditioning about an hour before, open the windows. She used to say. "You're going to kill this old man." I had the temperature come up to about 100 before I could let him come in.

When he arrived the first day, he was very upset. He said, "You know a frightful thing has happened. You know I have no possessions. But I had to have a watch. I had a 5 shilling Ingersoll watch I bought in London, on a string around my waist and somebody went and stole it in the train."

I said, "What a fightful care."

He said, "You wouldn't think—it's the only thing I've got and they've taken it." He was almost in tears. Rather sweet of him.

He was like a little bird chirping. The time I brought him and Jinnah together they sat two yards apart and they couldn't

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till August 15, 1947; Supreme Commander administering partition of the Indian Army till November 30, 1947.

hear each other. I had to push their chairs together.

Q. *When you revealed to Jinnah what a "moth-eaten Pakistan" would be in his plan, were you trying to drive him to face the reality of what he was asking for in the hope that it might bring him to his senses?*

A. Correct. I was trying every trick I could play on him. I was trying to appeal to him in every way I possibly could. **But you see he had discovered the extraordinary success he'd been able to have through continuing to say no.** This was unbeatable. And he'd made this discovery before I came out. The only difference between the various negotiators he'd had before and me, was that he had no audience before which to say no, and it's not the same thing to say it to one person. He had no gallery to play to. The only time he had a gallery, he just had to nod his head. It's my experience that people talk quite differently when they're alone than when there are other people listening.

Q. *In researching for* **Freedom at Midnight** *we made the astonishing discovery that Jinnah was dying of tuberculosis in 1947 and that his doctor didn't expect him to live for more than six or seven months. Were you aware of this?*

A. Not only was I not aware, but nobody was aware. Nobody had a clue. I'm glad I didn't because I just don't know what I would have done if I'd known that.

You see, Jinnah was so much of a one-man band. **If somebody had told me he's going to be dead in x months would I then —I am asking myself this question now—would I have said, Let's hold India together and not divide it? Would I have put back the clock, and held the position? Most probably.** I have a feeling Jinnah may not have known himself he had tuberculosis. He was a very severe, cold and repressed person. Nothing would

have surprised me about him. He was an extraordinary creature.

**However, it is clear that Wavell and others knew that Jinnah was seriously ill by the time I reached Delhi.** No such rumour reached me, my wife, my staff, my daughter. Nor any of my immediate British staff. The previous British staff if they knew about it, kept it to themselves. This was disastrous because if I had known, things would have been handled quite differently. Liaquat Ali Khan was a man one could deal with, an Indian gentleman. Jinnah was a lunatic. He was absolutely, completely impossible. I don't think we would have waited for him to die because that, I don't think . . . we neither could have afforded the time, nor could we have felt certain of it. But what we could have done is to argue with him in a very different way. I assumed I was dealing with a man who was there for keeps, and had Pakistan as his object on which I couldn't steer him around. **If in fact, we suppose for a moment that Jinnah had died, literally before the transfer of power, I believe the Congress would have been so relieved that their arch enemy was dead—and none of the others were regarded as anything more or less than Jinnah's shadow—we would have been dealing on a basis where Congress would have been prepared to give up much more and the others would have been ready to accept that.** It's a horrifyihg thought that we were never told.

Q. *Perhaps Wavell didn't take the rumours seriously?*

A. Yes, well he should have taken them seriously, checked on them. After all, he had at his disposal one of the finest CID* in the world. If I wanted to find out something, I only had to ask the CID. The British had their fingers everywhere, an enormous organization which worked almost up to the end. Yet, I suppose that if the CID had heard it, they would have told me.

*Criminal Investigation Department.

Anyway, that I wasn't told, was almost criminal. The only chance, and I'm saying this now on the spur of the moment, it was the only chance we had of keeping some form of unified India, because he was the only, I repeat the only, stumbling block. The others were not so obdurate. I am sure the Congress would have found some compromise with them.

Q. *With the Muslim League as well?*

A. You see, I liked the Muslim League people—they were mostly the people from the officer class of the Indian Army—much more than the Hindus. We came around to the Hindus more after I got out to India than before. I wasn't pro-anybody, but I really did like the Muslims. I had so many friends. Don't forget the history of India is basically one of conquest. When the Moghuls came along they in fact, conquered India and ran India, and people like the Nizam were the viceroys of the Moghuls in the south. The Hindus were completely militarily beaten and treated as the occupied people by the occupying power.

But they were good brains; much better brains than the Muslims. I'm generalizing; Hindus were good shopkeepers, good business people, good clerks, good civil servants, and were employed by the British and they fitted in very well. They enjoyed serving the British—they preferred to serve the British, don't forget, than to serve the Muslims who were prepared to be gracious as hosts and go hunting and that sort of thing, but did not like the idea of toeing the line to the British at all. They were prepared to enter the army and so forth, but in fact the Hindus got into the whole machinery; they got into it because the Muslims weren't prepared to work in that sort of way with us.

I think you'll find this one of the things that's not completely understood. The British out there were naturally more easily

friends with Muslims because they played polo, they went out shooting, they mixed freely, they didn't have any sort of inhibitions. The Hindus didn't get on so well with the British. Frankly, no Muslim ever took part in any plotting against the British. They wanted the British to remain, it secured their position. The last thing that Jinnah wanted was that we should go. He said first he didn't want a separate Pakistan, just wanted us to stay and hold the reins for them. But the Hindus wanted us to go because they had gone to British universities, they were all terribly imbued with sort of Fabian ideas and they just thought it was wrong that the British should be ruling India. I mentioned that we ruled with the consent, with the affection, of the vast masses. No doubt of that. But the intelligent, educated people didn't like it. So that this is one of the things one was up against.

So how could we meet the Congress Party's desire without transferring power? We couldn't. We were obliged to the transfer of power. Nobody, and particularly me, wished to have any partition in India. It was a ghastly thought. And it wasn't going to work. It wasn't really going to work because, you see, if you look at the distribution of the Muslim population in India, it's all over India. I don't suppose that we were able to separate more than half the Muslims and make them into East and West Pakistan. The rest of them were all over India. Most were perfectly happy to stay.

Now, I suppose my wife and I were about the first people to show genuine affection for Indians, irrespective of their creed. Don't forget you had Parsees and Jains also. The last Jain king lost his throne because as he was marching out to meet his enemy, the rains came and he cancelled the march, for fear of the tremendous loss of insect life his troops would cause marching across the marshes when the insects were coming out.

And there were the Christians also. The south of India became Christian about the first century A D under St Thomas. So you will never understand the problem of India unless you realize it

is not a country. It's called a subcontinent because it's attached to the continent of Asia, but it is, in fact, a continent. It's comparable to Europe in almost every way. The dimensions are not very far apart. The number of races, of languages, of dialects, of religions, is pretty near as great. And what the English did is produce a common market, run by them as sort of overlords 200 years ago. It's a very remarkable piece of social work which mustn't be minimized. So it was tragic that we should have had to divide it on leaving.

Q. *Would you say you were pre-disposed in any way, before you reached India?*

A. It's very difficult to say for certain what the state of my mind was on arrival. I was a great believer in a unified India. I thought the greatest single legacy we could leave the Indians was a unified country. It's a hell of an achievement to have a unified India. I realized I still had to unify the states with the rest of India. That, I thought was going to be the greatest difficulty and indeed it was an absolute miracle that we managed to get that straightened out.

I thought we should try everything we could to keep India united and I really was very keen that we should find a solution.

Q. *What did the Hindu leaders think of partition?*

A. Nehru was horrified by the idea of partition. He was an extraordinarily intelligent man. He saw the point on everything. He almost got himself in serious trouble when he saw the point on the Indian National Army court martials which no one else could see. He saw everything I was trying to do. I was completely in step with him. He would have given me any help he could to try and keep India unified if Jinnah had shown any sort of advance at all. Nehru was a first class chap.

Gandhi had no key at all. The key to the whole thing obviously was Jinnah. Not only that, but I believe there was confusion all the way through. Most people thought it was Gandhi. If they didn't think it was Gandhi they thought it was Nehru. But it wasn't Gandhi, it wasn't Nehru, it was Jinnah and Patel. They were the two people.

If Mr Jinnah had died of this illness about two years earlier, I think we would have kept the country unified. He was the one man who really made it impossible. I didn't realize how impossible it was going to be until I actually met Jinnah.

I have the most enormous conceit in my ability to persuade people to do the right and intelligent thing, not because I am persuasive, so much, as because I have the knack of being able to present the facts in their most favourable light. I didn't realize there was nothing at all you could do about Jinnah. He had completely made up his mind. Nothing would move him.

Q. *There was an impasse?*

A. All I could do was just to negotiate. For instance, he wanted to have the whole of the Punjab, the whole of Bengal, and I told him this was not on. And then of course there followed that amusing and rather tragic game of around and around the mulberry bush which I shall describe.

When I told Jinnah I don't want you to have a partitioned India, I gave him all my reasons, and he said, "Well, I am afraid we must. We can't trust them. Look what they did to us in 1938-39. When you go, we'll permanently be at the mercy of the elected Hindu majority and we shall have no place, we shall be oppressed and it will be quite terrible."

I told him I was quite certain that people like Nehru, and there were many of his colleagues like him, had no intention whatever of oppressing them.

He said, "Well, that's what you say, but Nehru was still the

most important figure when they did, in fact, oppress us in 1938-39. And he failed to stop it. But," he said, "you must give me a viable Pakistan. You must give me the whole of the Punjab as well as Sind and NWFP and Bengal and Assam, and I shall want a corridor to unite them."

I said, "Look, Mr Jinnah, you have said that you won't agree to having a minority population ruled by a majority population."

"Absolutely."

"Alright. I happen to know that in the Punjab and Bengal there are wide areas where the opposite community is in the majority. It happens also that they just about divide east and west. So I'm afraid that if you want Pakistan, I shall have to arrange for the partitioning of both the Punjab and Bengal. You cannot take into Pakistan the Hindus of Punjab and Bengal."

**"Your Excellency doesn't understand that the Punjab is a nation. Bengal is a nation. A man is a Punjabi or a Bengali first before he is a Hindu or a Muslim. If you give us those provinces you must, under no condition, partition them. You will destroy their viability and cause endless bloodshed and trouble."**

"Mr. Jinnah, I entirely agree."

"Oh, you do."

"Yes, of course. A man is not only a Punjabi or a Bengali before he is a Muslim or Hindu, but he is an Indian before all else. What you're saying is the perfect, absolute answer I've been looking for. You've presented me the arguments to keep India united."

"Oh, you don't understand. If you do that. . ." and so we'd start all over again.

"Look, Mr. Jinnah, it is a fact you want partition?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, if you want partition then you must have partition of Punjab and Bengal."

You know, not only did this go on for hours, it went over several discussions. He simply was caught in his own trap. He finally gave up and said, "So you insist on giving me a moth-eaten Pakistan."

I said, "You call it a moth-eaten Pakistan. I don't even want you to take it at all if it's as moth-eaten as that. I'd really like you to leave India unified."

But he was absolutely set on his great cry of no—he was the de Gaulle of his day—and when after about three or four of these sessions I realized the man was quite unshakeably immovable and quite impervious to any quarrel or logical argument and not even prepared to look at any safeguards which I might be able to devise, I told him, "Mr. Jinnah, if only you would believe me, if only you would accept some organization like the Cabinet Mission Plan* you would find that you could have great autonomy, the Punjab and Bengal could rule themselves, it would be even more autonomous than the USA. It would be quite independent. What is more, you could have the great pleasure of oppressing the minorities in any way you wanted to, because you'd be able to prevent the centre from interfering. Doesn't that appeal to you?"

**"No, I don't want to be a part of India. I'd sooner lose everything than be under a Hindu raj."**

He went on and on. Very early I realized what I was up

*The Cabinet Mission, headed by Lord Pethick-Lawrence and consisting of Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr (later Viscount) A.V. Alexander, arrived in Delhi in April 1946 and prepared an ingenious plan, generally credited to Cripps. It proposed a two-tiered federal plan which was to be expected to maintain national unity while conceding the largest measure of regional autonomy. There was to be a federation of the provinces and the states, with the federal centre controlling only defence, foreign affairs, and communications. At the same time, individual provinces could form regional unions to which they could surrender some of their powers by mutual agreement.

against, I never would have believed, I had never visualized that an intelligent man, well-educated, trained in England, was capable of closing his mind—it wasn't that he didn't see it—he closed his mind. A kind of shutter came down. Then I realized that while he was alive, nothing could be done The others could be persuaded, but not Jinnah. He was a one—man band, and the one man did it like that.

Mind you, Jinnah is now forgotten. He was the man who did it. Bangladesh and all that misery which I forecast. Twenty-five years ago Rajagopalachari* and I said it would last 25 years. It had to. . .It couldn't go on. **All this misery and trouble was caused by Jinnah and no one else. And he hasn't had one word said against him. He was the evil genius in this whole thing.** He presented a peaceful solution. He wouldn't play along at all. He was perfectly friendly and courteous and polite, at the end, emotionally pleased when I took him around and prevented him from being blown up. But with him there, you couldn't move him. You could move all the others. When Jinnah came to see me, he always sat there (relaxes, sits back easily). Ali Khan, when he came in with Jinnah sat right on the edge of his chair. He'd keep saying, "Yes, Qaidi." He would not even sit back.

The only difference between the scheme I was prepared to give Jinnah and that which he would have got under the Cabinet Mission Plan was that under the Cabinet Mission Plan he was obliged to accept a small, weak centre at Delhi controlling the defence, communications and external affairs. The three might really be lumped together under the general heading of defence.

That speech was absolutely the last plea for a united India. Please remember, every one of these interviews lasted one hour.

*Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Member for Industries and Supplies in the Interim Government, Governor of Bengal after August 15, 1947, and the first Indian Governor-General from June 21, 1948.

They were reduced in my notes to three or four pages. They represented, each page, 15 minutes of talking. Therefore, one-eighth of what was said was compressed into this.

I then realized that he had this faculty of closing his mind to the thing—he could see points, he was an able debater, he had a well-trained mind, he was a lawyer, but **he gave me the impression of having closed his mind, closed his ears; he didn't want to be persuaded, he didn't want to hear. I mean whatever one said, it passed him absolutely by.** In the case of partitioning Punjab and Bengal, he didn't even seem to have been listening to the previous thing at all.

His great strength . . . he got all this by closing his mind and saying, "No." **And how anybody could fail to see Jinnah held the whole key to the situation, to the continent, in his hand, I fail to understand. I was under no illusions. I saw that dear old Gandhi held nothing at all in his hands.**

I can remember when Jinnah had got his Pakistan. When the British Government was prepared to let me put forward the plan of June 3, when even the Sikhs had swallowed it, and Congress. This is what he'd been playing for, and he'd got it. And he said, "No."

Actually what he said was, "I shall have to put it to the Muslim League Council."

I said, "I can give you until midnight. Or 8 a.m."

He said, "I can't get them here before a week."

I said, "Mr. Jinnah, if you think that I can hold the position for a week you must be crazy. You know this has been drawn up to the boiling point. A miracle has been achieved in that the Congress Party, for the first time, is prepared to accept this sacrifice of partition. But they are not going to be shown up. Having to wait for you to get your Muslim League to accept it tonight or tomorrow morning, it's out for good. And this is going to make a terrible mess and we aren't going to start again. You'll never again get the Congress Party to respond."

And we went on and on. And he said, "No, no, I must do this thing the logical, legal way, as is properly constituted. I am not the Muslim League."

I said, "Now, now Mr. Jinnah, come on. Don't tell me that. You can try and tell the world that. But please don't try and kid yourself that I don't know who's who and what's what in the Muslim League."

And then he said, "I must do this thing absolutely legally."

I said, "I'm going to tell you something. I can't allow you to throw away the solution you worked so hard to get. It's absolutely idiotic to refuse to say yes. The Congress has said yes. The Sikhs have said yes. Tomorrow at the meeting, I shall say I have received assurance from the Congress Party, with a few reservations, that I am sure I can satisfy and they have accepted. The Sikhs have accepted. And I had a very long, very friendly conversation with Mr. Jinnah last night, we went through every point and Mr. Jinnah feels this is an absolutely acceptable solution. Now, at this moment, I will turn to you and you will nod your head in agreement, and if you shake your head (to indicate disagreement) you will have lost the thing for good, and as far as I am concerned, you can go to hell."

I didn't know whether he was going to shake his head or nod his head the next morning.

I said, "Finally, Mr. Jinnah has given me his personal assurance that he is in agreement with this plan," and I turned to him and he went like that.*

Now I can tell you that if he had shaken his head, the whole thing would have been in the bumble pot. **To think that I had to say yes for this clot to get his own plan through, it shows you what one was up against. This was probably the most hair-raising moment of my entire life. I've never forgotten that moment, waiting to see if that clot was going to nod or shake his head. He**

*Mountbatten nodded his head imperceptibly—*Authors.*

had no expression on his face. He couldn't have made a smaller gesture and still accepted.

The funny part is that the others, I knew, guessed that Jinnah was being difficult. And I think they realized the only hope for them to get a transfer of power quickly was to agree, and I think they allowed me to get away with it. They could have absolutely had me by questioning Jinnah, but they didn't. They knew pretty well what was going on.

You can't make too much of that, that dramatic moment when this great clot was about to throw everything away and I don't even know why. I can't imagine. He was the Muslim League and what he said, they did. He knew he'd got the last dreg. He knew as far as I was concerned, "You're out whether I shall stay or not, you're out. No one's going to deal with you if you reject this. You'll just have to fight for it."

**But isn't it fascinating that the whole thing should have depeneded on which way he was going to shake his head.**

Q. *Was there a sense of relief among the others?*

A. I, in fact, realized that none of them had the faintest conception of the administrative consequences of the decision they were taking, I'd given Ismay the special task with a high priority to work out all that had to be done. God knows, 30, 40, 50 major things. He produced this admirable paper on the administrative consequences of partition and transfer of power. That was brought down like an exam paper being issued by myself and that marvellous fellow Erskine Crum, and put around, and they couldn't resist looking at it and it destroyed the euphoria. I mean I'm nothing if not a stage manager. This was really stage managed. The result was that their whole attention was distracted by this. They came down to this. Even Jinnah was shaken. Then I did a thing that was very unpopular. To this day a lot of Indians hate it, even friends of mine like Mrs.

Pandit. I had a calendar made, which showed how many days were left to the transfer of power.

They disliked it because they thought it was a trick of mine. I knew it was unpopular but I couldn't care less. It was unpopular because they felt they were being put under pressure and they were. The reason they were under pressure was that if I'd let up on them the whole thing would have blown up under my feet.

I have no worry about Jinnah being shown up for the bastard he was. You know he really was. I actually got on with him, because I can get on with anybody. He made not one single effort at all. The worse thing he did to me was that he kept on saying I mustn't go, that I must stay, that if I didn't stay they wouldn't get their assets transferred so that after the transfer of power I must stay out in over-all charge. When this was analysed by my staff and myself, we realized that we couldn't have two governors-general with a viceroy over them after independence. Quite clearly the only way we could do the thing was if I were Governor-General of both provinces just for the transfer, and that was accepted tactily as the solution. My staff talked about it with his staff. And indeed we know that this came about because of the Indian side which first suggested that I should stay with them—and when they suggested that, which staggered me, that they were prepared to do it, then I said that I thought the solution would be if Jinnah wanted me to stay, then I must also stay as Governor-General of Pakistan.

It would have been absolute hell, living in two houses, it would be almost untenable, but I was prepared to try it. But he led us up the garden path. At the last moment this man—who obviously wanted to run Pakistan—instead of running it as the chief executive, i.e. the prime minister, decided to be the constitutional head of state who had no authority whatsoever under the Constitution.

When I discussed it with him I said, "You realize you've chosen the wrong thing. The man you want to be is the Prime Minister, he runs the country."

"Not in my Pakistan," he said, "there the Prime Minister will do what the Governor-General tells him."

So I said, "That's the whole reverse of the whole British concept of democracy."

"Nevertheless, that's the way I'm going to run Pakistan."

Then he said, "I'll accept you as Chairman of the Defence Council, a very important thing" - and he did until it finally broke down after the troubles. And he said, "I'll also accept the fact that you shouldn't feel that you can't accept the Indian invitation to be Governor-General of India. Please feel it would help us if you would, because the only way to retain my influence with them is by remaining as Governor-General. After all they've got everything and we've got nothing. We've got to get it out of them. Being Governor-General of Pakistan won't help you because we've got nothing to give, to transfer."

**Q.** *What were your own feelings about this exchange with Jinnah?*

**A.** You see, I found it very difficult to believe that an educated man, a man of apparent goodwill, with great affection and admiration for the British, a man who'd shown me consideration, although of a rather cold sort, I found it rather difficult to believe that he would accept India becoming a second class power, and destroy everything, and produce what he himself had said would be an unviable Pakistan. I had hoped that he would say, "If you give me absolute and complete autonomy, if you limit the centre's interference to inter-dominion committees which will sit and elaborate a common defence policy, I might go along with keeping India together."

Do you realize what he has done instead? He absolutely ensured the complete break-up of Pakistan because, you see, the

**wealth and population resided in East Bengal and they had loathed, they had learned to hate the others, and they've broken up completely.** They're now making friends with India. And the little tribes up in the north will split up; if it wasn't for the Americans giving the others enormous aid, they couldn't continue to exist. **They're finished the day America withdraws her aid.** I don't see how they can survive. Even with an army, an air force, they'll be completely at the mercy of India. All this I tried to explain to Jinnah. I went on and on, and I am fairly glib, and I was very clued up.

I don't think people realized what a one-man band this was. I don't believe people realize that nobody ever did any negotiating for me with anybody. Sometimes I'd try to get Ismay to go back to Jinnah to butter him up. He liked Ismay, but this was entirely a one-man band. Whereas before it was a negotiation by a sort of committee, by constant sitting around a table and thrashing things out.

If you, in fact, are doing it yourself on the other hand, if you know that what you say goes and you can tell London what you've done, you don't have to ask their permission. If you're a complete negotiator like that, then you can get things very easily.

So it isn't surprising it was a one-man band, that I knew all the answers. It had to be a one-man band. Even a stenographer sitting in the room would have absolutely killed the effect. They never in their lives had been faced with a Viceroy all by himself. They'd never in their lives had to deal with day to day conversations and continuing dialogue that went on day after day after day. They were used to round table conferences, to endless great discussions. This was something none of them had ever come across before.

It produced quite a different result. People saw points and moved and spoke in a way they'd never done before. **I will at once confess that I failed with Jinnah.** But let me tell you this,

nobody else would have been any more successful. I don't believe there was any more you could do with Jinnah. I must take the responsibility myself. And it was done at very high speed.

Q. *Why did you go so fast in transferring power?*

A. Yes, I know that I have been accused of being too hasty, too quick, typical sailor, man of action comes and rushes things. Let me tell you, it was touch—and—go whether I could hold the place together or whether it was going to blow up. Don't forget that this idiotic Indian government with which I was saddled, which consisted of 15 members, six Muslim League, six Congress, three others, the point is, any vote was always 9-6 in favour of what the Congress wanted. Therefore, you couldn't govern because the Muslim League wouldn't accept it. I had a brainwave. I had the idea of breaking the government up and making two governments, the government of the future India and the government of the future Pakistan. And this was a sort of formula that I devised that they would have the opposite side sitting with them. This kept them busy, they were busy working on partition and the transfer of assets. But the rumblings were so great that at times we wondered if I'd chosen an early enough date.

The date I chose came out of the blue. I chose it in reply to a question. I was determined to show I was master of the whole event. When they asked: had we set a date, I knew it had to be soon. I hadn't worked it out exactly then – I thought it had to be about August or September and I then went to the 15th of August. Why? Because it was the second anniversary of Japan's surrender. And I knew the thing was to have a date. And however much I consulted my staff, they would all give me different dates, later dates, and this ludicrously early date really put the cat among the canaries, frightened them all.

And they had to work. I'm quite certain that going slower would have meant that the breakdown would have occurred in Delhi. Now what would have happened? Under Section 93 I could have taken the whole of India under my own, personal direct rule. What a way to handle the country! And without that, the whole thing was breaking down.

**I am absolutely convinced and ready to stake everything on the fact that the time will come when it will be recognized that I couldn't have gone any slower. I only just held the position by going as fast as I did.**

The idea that my "reckless speed" caused all the bloodshed is absolute nonsense. I haven't the slightest doubt that any other course would have been a disaster. Read Lord Ismay. Ask any person who was out there with me. I just managed to hold out. That's one of things that's still not believed or understood.

Winston told me, "You killed two million Indians." First, the actual figures are not two million. Penderel Moon who is the editor of Wavell's papers gives in his book the estimate of 200,000. In fact, the famine of 1943-44 killed two or three million who lacked proper British administration. And in fact, I let the Indians have five per cent of my military shipping to bring food to them. We saved many more lives by doing that than were lost in 1947.

**The reason for speed was not to go and muck up Pakistan. It was because the thing was breaking up under my hands. The reason was that neither side would cooperate with each other. I could feel the damn thing simmering. It's like standing on the edge of a volcano and feeling the moment of explosion.**

To begin with there wasn't the remotest hope of holding in until June 1948. How soon I wasn't sure, but the more I saw of it, the more sure I was that it couldn't be too soon. I felt I was strong enough to be certain that we would transfer to them all of their typewriters and their stenographers and their sterling balances. I felt honour bound to try and see all that go through.

I acted as a kind of forwarding agent for Pakistan because I felt, to some extent, they'd been pushed and I therefore had to remain to see it was done. And I shall make no bones about it. I was the man who suggested the 55 crores to Gandhi who hadn't even heard about it.

But, to hark back: **it was not Patel who pushed it on to me. It was the fact that I couldn't hold the damn thing together.** We had to get a move on. People would say go slow: well you could go slow in a factor of, say, ten years. But you couldn't help things by hanging on for ten months.

Q. *At the Governors' Conference, April 15, did you present outlines of a plan for the transfer of power?*

A. I did not. I presented them with the way my mind was working. I hadn't got a plan. There was no plan until I sent home the first draft with Lord Ismay, and the second one I brought home myself.

Q. *In your April 14 meeting with General Auchinleck, you refer to the plan as Plan Balkan. . .*

A. This was a rough plan. This was the idea of the Balkanization of India—letting them all choose what they wanted to do. Look, things were continuously flexible, they were ordered from day to day. First, I wanted to have a unified India. When that was given up, I then wanted to have an India which would have the least possible weakening of the centre, and the best possible arrangement. If there hadn't been those troubles, we would have had the overall Defence Council, which Jinnah accepted, and the alternative was that he was to be the chairman. In fact he asked me to be the chairman. And that was going to be the answer for External Affairs, Defence and Communications.

**Q.** *Did the Governors help you in finding a solution? Weren't they too biased themselves?*

**A.** They were. You see, I thought I had a great advantage in not having devoted my life to India. I thought that those who had, who were the experts, had completely failed to find a solution. And I felt that their very background made it difficult for them to find a solution. I thought the reason was probably that they were too steeped in the old British Raj system and they were always trying to find a solution which would do the least possible violence to the system as it then existed.

I'd come out to find a solution without any pre-conceived notions except that I was ordered to transfer power by a certain date, and by the sole suggestion that I should be instructed to find a means of keeping the country unified. In London they hadn't even put this in my instructions; I had asked for it specifically and it was put in. **I also asked them for instructions that I should try and keep India in the Commonwealth, which they hadn't thought of including. I wrote my own ticket, as you might say.**

I then went out, with the aim of trying to achieve all the things I thought were right. And every single evening at the staff meeting, we discussed where we'd got—how far we'd advanced, what new facets came in (like when we had the Sikhs to deal with), and we built up from there. There's a continual possibility which was building itself up, and I used to try over these various plans—at the staff meeting I'd come to the conclusion we'd do the thing one way, and try it on the various members to get their reactions.

I thought I'd found a complete agreement for the plan I sent over with Lord Ismay, and then there was the famous incident with Nehru in Simla,* when I had to trust my hunches—on

*See *Freedom at Midnight*, p. 125.

more than one occasion I'vehad hunches. I always had a hunch when I had no logical reason for taking a certain line of action which was against the advice of my entire staff.

Q. *How did the idea of Dominion status evolve?*

A. There is a theory that V.P. Menon alone put up the idea of Dominion status to me. And he, alas, in his very humble little conceit, likes to make out that he thought it up, and drafted it, and gave it to me. Of course, this was in the discussions all the way through. And don't forget that V.P. Menon was selling this idea to Patel while Krishna Menon was selling it to Nehru. **And I cannot allow history to accept the fact that this Dominion status solution, which at the time was a brainwave, was just V.P. Menon.**

Q. *In your interviews with your Indian partners, you emphasized the need to retain the Commonwealth link.*

A. I had to be asked to be ordered to do it. It was important for a number of reasons. Mostly, I couldn't bear that I had to go out, to throw India out of the Commonwealth, or to accept complete secession. I didn't want that. I was prepared to find a solution; I emotionally deeply wanted it to be within the Commonwealth. I know that was my background. Because I asked, the whole time, that I should be allowed to find a solution which would be within the Commonwealth. That's emotional. I have a very strong feeling about the Commonwealth.

Q. *Can vou elucidate?*

A. I'll try my best. You've got to throw your mind back to 1947. The war was just over, a war in which we'd entirely failed to defend our Far Eastern people, and where we had to prove ourselves again. Well, we did it, I as Supreme Commander, by

throwing the Japanese, who were on the inside of India—the battlefield was in India, don't forget. I had to prove (*a*) that we'd thrown them out by force of arms, and thus at least vindicated our appalling lack of preparedness against the Japanese in the first instance; (*b*) having re-established our right by force of arms against our enemies and retained the Empire and the Commonwealth, I didn't want to go out to separate any part—and so big a part—to prise out the brightest jewel in the British Empire crown, and throw them out. That's what made me unhappy. And I was desperately groping for ways and means of keeping them within.

That's emotional. Now, let's do it a bit more logical. **I had a feeling that if the Indians went out on a limb, without the advantage of the British connection, they would probably not be able to carry on.** I don't say it would have been a Congo, but it might well have been a General Idi Amin; do you know what I mean? Not that they weren't very intelligent, but they had no experience. Whenever I spoke, I realized that they didn't begin to know how to administer. I mean I didn't know that administration was such a black art!—having been brought up in it all my life. I was amazed at their complete lack of admistrative capacities. All they could do was to run the agitational side of a campaign, which is very different indeed from trying to administer a country.

And I felt they couldn't run the three services yet by themselves, nor did the three services wish to sever their link. Don't forget that when I met the last British judge in the Punjab—in 1967, I think—he said, "They want me to stay, but I'm too old. I must go." And in about 1963 I met the last judge in Bombay, who also. . . . They didn't want to let them go. From the point of view of jurisprudence and the Law Courts, this gave them continuity of law. And British law has meant a lot to India.

We also had the technicians. We had the people who could help them with their radio, which was being developed. We had

the people who could help them in their universities, in their police, everywhere, the connection simply couldn't be just cut and I knew that when it came to officers of the navy, the army and the air force, and probably the police, and other organizations like that, they would be unwilling to sever their link with the Crown to serve India, and those who did would be nothing but adventurers. They'd be just, simply, mercenaries. And you don't get the best sort of people as mercenaries.

**From every point of view, it began to become more and more clear to me that the only way they could develop, was not by—I was going to say by cutting the umbilical cord too soon—but they had to continue to take nourishment and strength from us.**

It's the least we could do in return. I came out with this determination, and tried to find the connection. And bit by bit I began to grasp—at every turn I could see, even now, it was an absolute miracle that they could see the point, and wish to keep us. And I think that by far my most lucky achievement was to get that through.

Q. *Did you feel the natural cradle for an independent India was the Commonwealth?*

A. Yes. I wanted it for Burma also but I was too late. But I did give it to India.

Q. *How did it come about in your mind?*

A. The Commonwealth meant so much to me. And with this emotional background I began to grasp at every straw in the right direction. Whenever I could see any opportunity. . .Krishna Menon, on the one hand for Nehru, and V.P. Menon, on the other hand, for Patel, who were the two people that mattered, I suddenly found falling in more and more with my own feelings about things. I'm not going to say that I, one day, invented the

link or found the solution, but they didn't either. It was two way traffic the whole time. And the important thing about people like Krishna Menon and V.P. Menon is, that they were not leaders in any sense of the word at all, but they were my links with leaders.

Q. *The symbol of this tie is the British Crown. But the Indian leaders wanted a sovereign republic. How could this be reconciled with a link with the Crown?*

A. Yes, Nehru asked me one day, "How can we remain in the Commonwealth?" I went to George VI and got him to agree that he would have them in as a Republic. Unless he was going to agree, I wasn't prepared to play at all. Then we got down to it. I can remember discussing the details with King George—that they would keep the same uniform, merely putting the three lions on their shoulder instead of the actual crown. The same symbols. That they would keep the white ensign with the red cross of St George, just as in the navy—that the thing would be as near as possible the same; and that there must be a specific link. They must owe some common allegiance to the King. We hadn't invented the title Head of the Commonwealth, because that side was still being developed when the King died. Krishna Menon came to see me the day he died, and he said, "We've got to find the title for the new Queen from the beginning."

And we between us thought up that idea of Head of the Commonwealth. And he sold it to India, and we got that title put in, under which republics could remain within the Commonwealth.

**I don't know what happened, but somehow I began to realize that we could in fact keep them, through a logical necessity, even though I had originally wanted to stay with them for emotional reasons. I can't explain it. But something of that sort happened, and it happened entirely in me, in my mind, and had**

**nothing to do with my staff or anybody else.**

To that exent this was a developing thought, and I can't sufficiently go back and tell you . . . that's difficult to believe, most people don't, and you may not believe it; but this was so much a one-man band, this was so much me alone, for better or for worse, that it was my own developing personality which in fact impinged right through, because—almost terrifying—**what I said went with almost everybody. That was the frightening part.**

Q. *What part did the King play in the genesis of the Commonwealth idea?*

A. I want to say something about the King. The King was a much more progressive person than was commonly realized. He was not a very great talker, not exactly inarticulate, he had this sort of stammer and he didn't find it very easy to make conversation. He had never interfered with me, and I'd known him all my life. And we influenced each other in a very great way, because he . . . when he wanted me to go out, in subsequent conversations he said, "I'm pinning all my hopes on you, because anybody else who went out to negotiate, I would not necessarily feel in sympathy or that he was trying to do it the way I would like to see it done." So I knew I had the King's backing to the hilt.

Q. *The King wanted the link maintained?*

A. Ah. It was his one idea. He said, "I know I've got to take the "I" out of G.R.I.*—I've got to give up being King Emperor, but I don't want to give up the links with India." His one ambition was to visit India. Of course, I told the Queen, I said, "Your father would have gone, and you must go, and I'll fix it."

**George Rex Imperator* (George, King Emperor).

I must associate the King entirely with the desire to keep India in the Commonwealth. He was very strong on this. I don't say I put it into his head, or he put it into my head, but there were things that developed. You can't compare it but, for instance, when two people fall gradually and slowly in love who makes love? It grows up, this common interest, and so, an idea can be brought to fruition by mutual action; he was the person most on the converse side.

Q. *Can we move now to the Simla Conference? Did you have one of your hunches on this?*

A. The way the Simla meeting built up was this. **Remember that the plan* I sent home on May 2nd, 1947 had never been seen in writing by any of the Indian leaders at all.** But I had personally created the plan by constantly talking about it, clause by clause, with every leader and getting his reactions, to the point at which I felt reasonably confident that I had not included anything to which they would object. Lord Ismay flew home with it—with Sir George Abell if I remember right—and I thought I'd go to Simla.

I sent for Colonel Currie, the Military Secretary, and said to him that I wished to move to Simla. It was very hot, you see, at the end of May. I wanted to get up into the cool hills, the Himalayas, I wanted to have a rest. I had no more meetings, I couldn't have any more. And I had several days to spend there. I said, "We want to move up in eight day's time, the same day that Lord Ismay leaves."

"Oh," he said, "I'm afraid I can't possibly open Viceregal Lodge in eight days. I require three weeks' notice."

"I'm sorry, you haven't got three weeks' notice, you've got a

*See *Freedom at Midnight*, p. 124, and the Reports in Part II of this volume.

week."

"I can't do it."

"All right," I said, "book me into the local hotel."

"Absolutely out of the question!"

I said, "Well, my dear Currie, you've got to make up your mind, whether you're going to put me in an hotel, or in Viceregal Lodge, but I'm going to Simla, eight days from now. And I'm not taking anybody up—just Her Ex (the Viceroy's wife was always called Her Ex, the Viceroy was called His Ex) and I'm taking Pammy.* That's us three. I am going to ask Nehru and Krishna Menon to come up, just to keep us company, because I'm very fond of them. That's five." Then I said, "The Secretariat will continue to function in Delhi, but I'll take up one private secretary (I think it was Admiral Brockman). I think I'll also take up Alan Campbell-Johnson to keep in touch with the Press, and I'll take about three or four of the staff."

And he said, "This is out of the question. I can never get the house open, get everything ready. I can't move all the servants up."

I said, "Think it over, because just remember this. I'm going to Simla in eight days' time; it's up to you to decide where you're going to put us up, and if you can't do it in the house, of course, I am going to an hotel."

He came back and said, "Well, I've had an emergency meeting and we can just do it in eight days provided you assure me that you are going to rest privately, that you won't want to have any luncheon parties."

"No."

"Dinner parties?"

"No."

"Garden parties?"

*Pamela Mountbatten.

"No."

"Cocktail parties?"

"No."

"Balls?"

"No."

"Then we can do it."

When we got up there I sent a note, saying. "Please let me know exactly how many people we've brought from Delhi"—knowing that they had quite a big staff in the place. I remember—never got over it—it was 333!

There were two ways of getting up into the hills, you could either go by a very delightful little narrow gauge train which took all the luggage and staff, and which I had been up in, it was rather fun, or you could drive up in a car, more dramatic really, climbing right up into the Himalayas. You could either drive up to Amballa, or you could take the train up, or you could fly there. I actually used to fly.

While we were at Simla, London started telegraphing amendments to the plan. They couldn't resist not picking and altering, exactly like the old days. So by the time they'd finished, the plan did not look the same as it had when I started, although in retrospect I am bound to agree that they had not made any changes of substance. Because it no longer had the same presentation that I had worked out with the leaders, I was worried. I said, "I have an uneasy feeling that this may not be acceptable." They'd never seen the old plan, but at least they'd known the words I'd used, and now the words had changes, the presentation was different.

And I had a meeting with the staff. Now, the staff I'd brought up were V.P. Menon, whom I always took everywhere, Alan Campbell-Johnson and Ronnie Brockman. Anyway, I had quite a high-powered staff of five or six, and I said, "I'm worried about this. I don't like the way the plan is presented now, I don't like to table this without having tried it over. Now time doesn't

admit of suddenly having all the leaders up here, or going down and having a formal meeting, and I don't want a formal meeting. I think I'll try it on Nehru and Krishna Menon."

"Oh," they said, "this is absolutely out of the question. This would be a breach of faith. If it were known that you'd shown it to them, and it leaked, this would be sufficient for Jinnah to say no, for Baldev* to say no; even the Congress Party might go back on Nehru. This undermines the whole principle, it comes back to secret diplomacy instead of honest, open candour."

And so we sat for a long while, and I said, "I'm very sorry, I think you're absolutely right. But I have a hunch, that I must show it to Nehru and that he's not going to like it."

They said, "That's even worse, then it wouldn't matter so much if he just liked it, but this. . . How are you going to handle that?"

I said, "I'll handle that when I get to it. I'm going to show it to him."

And if I remember right, I told Nehru and Krishna Menon that I had now had a copy amended from Whitehall—though they'd never seen the original they had known its general contents—I now wanted them to see how it had been presented. **Nehru took it away to read that night, and the next day I thought he was going to explode; he was white with rage.**

Q. *Do you remember how you handed the report to him?*

A. From memory, I think it happened in the room in which I'd had my meetings. He just came in and I gave him the report and gave a bit of an explanation. He left and went into his room to study it. When I next saw him, he was white with rage. You know, he used to get these tantrums, having been in prison. He

*Baldev Singh, Sikh leader, Member for Defence in the Government of the Dominion of India.

took a long while to control himself. I spent hours trying to help him to collect himself together. By the time I left him he had absolutely recovered.

He said, "This is absolutely unacceptable, this is the Balkanization of India, this is exactly what we don't want to present." He went on and on and on, and Krishna Menon apparently went along with him.

In my recollection, I then brought the staff in, whose reaction was not, how lucky that it worked. This is the fruit of not taking our advice, you see, you've now got yourself into a jam because, now, he's rejected it, and what are we going to do? Are we now going to call all the leaders together?

Q. *Was the announcement already out regarding the meeting? What was your excuse for calling it off?*

A. I said we weren't ready for it. And also I had to try and tell London that we didn't like their alterations. They might think they were not of any substance, but in point of fact we now had a plan which was not going to be accepted.

Then I remember talking to V.P. Menon separately, after this, and I said, "V.P., I know you're no particular friend of Nehru and Krishna Menon, you neither like them nor work with them very well." (He was a Patel man), I said, "How can we possibly handle this? V.P., I think we've got to do a fresh presentation draft on this. We can't change our position very much. That is to say, we've got to accept partition. The partition must be decided by the votes of the constituent assemblies, so that we haven't forced it on them, but the way it is now written, according to Nehru, it is inviting the different provinces to vote separately and break it all up."

And that was when V.P. Menon put up to me the proposals which I then put up and which were very far-reaching. The main thing about them, of course, was that by going back to the

**Government of India Act, 1935 utilising the position of Dominion status, V.P. Menon worked the thing out with me. And it worked*.**

Now it has been said and claimed—on behalf of V.P. Menon, not by V.P. Menon—that he entirely re-wrote the plan on his own. This is not really so. He discussed every step with me; **but what is true is that we didn't bring the others in.**

And then, of course, Nehru became overjoyed. Both Nehru and Krishna Menon were extremely happy not to appear to have been given the plan before so they didn't embarrass me by putting me in that position, which was rather lucky.

**Q.** *Nehru's anger, was this the first time you had seen it?*

**A.** Oh no. We used to have the most ludicrous scenes. He wanted Sir Conrad Corfield, the Political Secretary, whom he hated (and who had been on the Viceroy's staff when I was there in 1921) thrown out and publicly disgraced. I was to sack him, all that sort of thing, because he was the enemy of India!

He used really to get difficult to contain, and I used to say, "You're not helping yourself. You're not helping me. You're not improving your image."

"I can't bear it, I must speak out!"

I said, "I know. You're letting off steam, and I understand why. But if you're going to be Prime Minister without me—while I'm there I can do it for you—if one day you're going to run this place on your own, you've got to control yourself."

The very funny thing was that on this he always came and cried on my shoulder. He wanted someone to go back to. **I had a sort of funny feeling that Nehru actually required my presence in order to be able to function, and after Gandhi it was me.** He used to go back to Gandhi, and Gandhi was less and less use to him in the end, and then he was assassinated.

*See *Freedom at Midnight*, p. 127.

Q. *Nehru's "No" meant a crisis for you?*

A. And how, But just think, if I hadn't followed my hunch, just imagine the scene when they came round to have the plan in my study. All would have been blown up. All my efforts rejected. I would have looked a bloody fool, and my whole policy of trying to negotiate. . . . Why had all the other settlements failed? Because the moment you go and have a round table conference, everybody's objections are voiced and heard. Other people have to speak against them. It was entirely against my technique. An absolute one-man act. I mean, I was the only common factor to anybody, they all came back to me. And I had to make up my mind what they would take and what they wouldn't. **But the great thing about the rejection of that plan was that the next plan was so much better, and this gave V.P. Menon a chance to put up the idea.**

I must say something else about V.P. Menon. Normally, the Reforms Commissioner of the Viceroy was an Englishman; in fact Harry Hodson was Reforms Commissioner and then they introduced the idea of having an Indian assistant and, luckily for us, they got in V.P. Menon as his assistant. He was trained by Harry Hodson.

Q. *After the Simla crisis, you felt you had to go to London quickly?*

A. Exactly, I felt I had better go to London, although they could have come back to me; but I thought I should go to them.

I took V. P., he met the King at Buckingham Palace and he nearly passed out with pleasure—he never dreamt he was going to meet the King. I remember when he came in. He simply trembled, and was white with emotion at meeting the King Emperor himself.

**Q**. *What did the King have to say to him?*

**A**. Oh, he said very nice things to him. "I hear you've been the greatest possible help to His Excellency, and I'm grateful to you." Oh, he said all the right things.

What is so extraordinary is that they all always had this thing, felt this tremendous thing about the King. And the moment we behaved well—in what they considered a decent way—all the friendship came welling out again.

**Q**. *What were your concerns on going back to London?*

**A**. I was concerned with preparing myself so that I would be master of the situation. I didn't want to do any explaining away. I wanted to tell them how lucky they were that I'd had this hunch, how, in fact, although I would be prepared, the amendments they'd made had not done violence to the ideas, but had altered the presentation. And how I did admit that as a result of this presentation, of displeasing Nehru, up came certain fundamental objections which would have been present in any case.

And—working as fast as this, and I had to, for reasons I had already exposed to them—I said, "You realize I am still in the development stage, all I can tell you now is that I am now confident that this is a plan I can put over."

And, all the way through, I said how lucky they were—you see, I made no apology at all. I turned them inside out, I gave them no apology, nor any explanations. I simply said we had to work fast and at this rate. I think I had complete control, the whole Cabinet just listened. Nobody argued with me at all.

**I had as great control over the Cabinet as I had over the leaders in India at that time, and I had the most frightful, not so much conceit, but a complete and absolute belief that it all depended on me, and they had to do what I said or else. . .**

So I had no difficulty at all. I can remember not feeling the least bit worried. I had convinced myself that they were lucky that this had happened, and I was going to tell them how lucky they were. The point is I'd been given this job, and I knew that they thought it was very difficult to pull off. They had no option but to follow me, and Lord Ismay said to me, "They're pretty hopping mad with you, they don't know what you're doing. I don't know what you expect me to do; you've played fast and loose with me, you've sent me off on a wild-goose chase." He was very angry with me when he saw me, and he said, "You'll find it very difficult."

"Pug," I said, "I'm not in the least worried. They're so lucky this has happened." And I went in, and I remember his saying afterwards, "Honestly, I've seen a few performances, but what you've done to the people over here beats anything you've done in India." I mean, they were bewildered!

Q. *Was Attlee the key man?*

A. Attlee and, funnily enough, Stafford Cripps who was always with him at his right, because he'd been out to India.

Q. *While in London, you also met Churchill, didn't you?*

A. Yes. He was extraordinary, Winston. I showed you that cutting from the *Times* where he had paid a tribute, don't forget. The particular thing is this—in his congratulations on the solution, Winston Churchill said he wished to congratulate the Government on their perspicacity in appointing someone of my intelligence. He made some remark, you remember. I do want that quoted.

Q. *He was in bed that morning?*

**A.** As usual.

**Q.** *He liked to work there?*

**A.** Always did, in the morning.

**Q.** *Where was this?*

**A.** Must have been in Hyde Park Gardens. Where he always lay in great comfort, smoking a big cigar, half sitting up in bed, with a sort of quilted dressing-gown, a pair of spectacles at the end of his nose.

He very much disapproved of everything that was being done. He did not feel it was in the interests of India as a whole that they should have the efficient British administration removed, and a whole lot of inexperienced, theoretical people who couldn't do it. He really was quite sincere in his belief that this was best for the Indians.

And mind you, a funny part of me agreed with him. But I also knew this was absolutely indefensible in the long run. You couldn't go on for ever holding them. I merely wanted to try and get his blessing. You see, if he'd been sniping at me behind my back, it would have been very difficult.

**Q.** *Listowel* thinks one of your most important and underestimated achievements was, in your meeting with Churchill, persuading him not to oppose partition in the House.*

**A.** True, but not for me to say it.

**Q.** *Did Attlee, before this meeting say that he couldn't, but you could persuade Churchill?*

*Earl of of Listowel, Britain's last Secretary of State for India.

A. He said Winston Churchill's attitude towards the whole thing was so bitter and difficult that, "... neither I nor any of my Government could possibly persuade him. He's fond of you, he trusts you. You're the only person who has a chance to persuade him at all", and of course, I did.

Q. *According to Listowel, Churchill could have delayed the passage of the Independence Bill for two years by opposing it.*

A. **That, I might add, would have caused utter and complete beakdown. If this had happened, I could no longer hold the Interim Government together,** because you see, they consisted of six Congress, five Muslim League, three minorities—that's fourteen people. Whenever there was a vote, it was always five against nine—no possible vote. Now, ministers like Liaquat Ali Khan (Minister of Finance, very able) he was conducting the financial affairs of India so as to try and harm the future Indian people, and not the Muslims. For example, he was attacking the big business tycoons. The Congress Party couldn't admit it. As they were getting vast sums from these people—mainly from the black market—they couldn't afford to annoy them. And of course if, in fact, if Liaquat Ali's legislation had really gone through and hit them hard, they would have withdrawn their support of Congress and so forth.

That's just one example. But all the way through, every single thing was done purely and simply to improve their own position and spoil the position of the other people. So they were at loggerheads. Secondly, the Indian Civil Service were without question the highest-class corps of intelligent men in the world up to 1939. You meet George Abell, that's the standard—remarkable people. They ran India beautifully, brought in some Indians... They had not recruited in England for the I.C.S. since 1939. By 1947, they'd run out. You can't stop all recruitment for a total of eight years, and carry on. There were no

English recruitments for the Indian police. Physically, we could not have administered India indefinitely. Secondly, with all these leaders out, and in power, I couldn't do what Linlithgow did, round them all up and put them back into prison—I couldn't easily go under Section 93 (by which the Viceroy administered the whole of India personally) that would be direct rule by the Viceroy over a fifth of humanity, with an inadequate machine under me. The thing was breaking up! I devised the plan of having two ministers in every ministry—one from the future Pakistan, one from the future India, who were supposed to agree on legislation and look after things in their country. But this was already breaking down because, of course, all that happened was that the shadow minister tried to stop the real one from administering. You cannot administer a great big country if one person in the office has the power to veto.

So I can tell you now if I hadn't got round Winston . . . this I knew was the most important mission of the whole of my time. Talk about Jinnah's "Yes" or "No"—Winston's "No", would have been absolutely fatal. It would have brought down the complete pack of cards. So, that day—Attlee knew it too. He said, "Dickie. . . Jinnah may hold the key of India, but Winston holds the key over here." Because we knew that Winston'd not only have an overwhelming majority in the House of Lords, he'd have enough in the Commons as well. If he had done that, it would have been the breakdown of the Interim Government. He'd have forced me to go back into Section 93 without the means of implementing it. We'd have been hated. We'd have been more or less pushed out in ignominy, hatred, and that, Winston would have been quite prepared to see, I must tell you. He had absolutely no feeling about that.

If ever I've blessed the fact of being lucky in persuading people to do what I want . . .

Q. *Listowel claims he learned of your announcement of the date of transfer through the press. Was this date really news to him on June 4?*

A. News to everybody! I heard myself saying it!

Q. *Listowel worried that, technically, the Bill couldn't get through Parliamemt in time.*

A. He's quite wrong. I knew the only way I could get it through was to put the pressure on. We were sitting on top of a volcano, a fused bomb, and we didn't know when the fuse would go off!

Q. *You were aware of a potential drama. . .*

A. I knew Parliament's summer recess was coming in. I was being naughty. You see, I'm a very quick thinker on my feet. When this question first came to me I thought, Now, I've got to discuss with my staff—I know I can't hold on much longer. I know that if they don't get it through before the summer recess, we won't get it until October. I was helped by a very, very quick reaction—one of those hunches, and it paid off. If the whole thing wasn't through within six weeks to two months, it might have blown up. I think few people realize this. So I'm completely unrepentant. My staff were horrified, the Press was shattered, Whitehall was at sixes and sevens, but I was right.

Q. *Before leaving London, in your last talks with Attlee, what timing was mentioned?*

A. He was leaving it to me, to do it as quickly as I possibly could. He said, "Now you've got Winston straightened out, I think we can really put the heat on." You see, the speed of legislation depends on the degree of importance attached to it. If

you give it complete priority, you can do anything—if the other side are willing to help you. If the other side opposes, there's nothing you can do. My danger was not that parliamentary time wouldn't permit, but that Winston wouldn't, which was quite different.

**Q.** *Listowel was afraid that when Churchill saw the actual date announced, he would renege . . .*

**A.** No. That's not Winston at all. He's got it quite wrong. If Winston gave me his word—which he did, I told him why I wanted to do it quickly—he wouldn't go back on it. That's not something he would go back on. If I'd done it without consulting him—in that case, yes; but he knew that the agreement he'd given me meant as quickly as possible. You must understand this; I tried to pressurize him into making a decision. He'd made the decision and I was cashing in on it.

**Q.** *How important was the message Churchill gave you for Jinnah?*

**A.** Well, of course, it had the effect of his realizing that he couldn't rely on the extreme reactionary Conservatives in the country to back him, come what may, which he thought he could. I think it shook him, and was one of the reasons why . . . you see, one of the miraculous moments, when somehow God was on my side, was when Jinnah nodded his head. I think he nodded because whereas he couldn't bring himself to say, "Yes"—it was always "No"—he felt that if he didn't, I would say *he'd* lost Winston Churchill. I think that was at the back of it. I cannot sufficiently convey to you that this was the absolute, crucial moment. This was it. If this hadn't happened, I couldn't have even stayed. I could never have picked up the bits again.

I think Churchill's threat would have shown to him that he

couldn't look for any support over my head in England, which was at the back of his mind the whole way through. He thought he could hold me up because he was going to get the support of Winston and the Conservative Party. But if you use all your writers' skill, in both languages, to create the extraordinary atmosphere of that night, that this lunatic was about to throw this away.

Q. *Were you concerned or furious?*

A. Me? I never showed anything at all. I don't. I am a frightfully placid nature. Whenever I've fired anybody, I've done it very gently. I don't believe in histrionics. Very occasionally I can put on an act when it's necessary, but it just wasn't going to work with Jinnah. It would have given Jinnah the utmost satisfaction to think I'd lost my temper with him.

I commiserated with him. I said, "I'm so sorry you're putting yourself in this position, I'd like to try and save you from it."

But if I hadn't persuaded Churchill to back my plan on that trip it would have taken a year to get the Independence Bill through, and the whole thing would have blown up on my hands.

Q. *The June 3 Plan: what would you have done if the Indian leaders, or one of them only, had said "No"?*

A. I had no intention of letting this plan be spitted. If Jinnah had said no, I would have said, "I am satisfied with your reply to me and I defy you to say that yon can't understand how I can be satisfied with your answer. You'll look a fool."

As far as Gandhi was concerned, I was really worried. Jinnah was just being difficult but Gandhi was different. It meant a lot to him and I knew it. He'd reached the appalling predicament that he madly wanted independence and he madly wanted to

keep India unified. He had to face up to the fact that he could only kcep India unified if he didn't have independence and could only have independence at the price of unity. This was what was driving him mad. I did not think that in the long run he would want to sacrifice independence in order to maintain unity under the British. This couldn't be what he really wanted. He would like to have unity under any form other than the British. So I wasn't sure how he was going to play it.

Mind you, I used all the arguments I could muster to bring him around. Now, what would I have done if he was still determined to denounce it?

I'd have first said, "Look, be very careful before you denounce it because for the first time I shall have to try my strength against yours. Uptil now, your strength in the country has been paramount. I'm wondering if they'll follow you or me when I say, 'Gandhi wants you to remain united; so do I. The only way it can be done is under the British, you can't want the British to remain and govern you forever. If you can, find another solution—the Congress can find no solution, the Muslim League can find no solution, Gandhi can find no solution'."

I would have had to denounce him. But he was a sensible fellow. When I'd told him what I was going to do he wouldn't have gone through with it. My fall-back position was, it should not occur.

Imagine the men we would have hit if he did.

Q. *What was your mood, returning to India with the test of your plan re-drafted?*

A. Enormous optimism, with one fear only, that that unpredictable Gandhi was going to be against me. When I landed in Karachi, I was met by Mudie,* who said to me, "You're going

*Sir Robert Francis Mudie, Governor of Sind, 1946 to 1947.

to have Gandhi against you, we've been warned."

And then, of course, this remarkable thing happened. Gandhi came in, and showed me it was a day of silence; and I'm sure that was an act of friendship. It wasn't his usual day of silence.

He had with him about half-a-dozen used envelopes which I've still got at Broadlands, and on the back of these envelopes was a filthy little stub of pencil which wasn't properly sharpened. It was all licked. He wrote a whole lot of ridiculous sort of statements—which I've got—and that, the fact that he let me do all the talking and only intervened with a few remarks on paper, gave me a chance . . . if he, in fact, had not had a day of silence, I don't know how it would have ended. I'm sure it was a tribute to me that he decided to have a day of silence.

Q. *In what mood were you before he arrived?*

A. I was certain I'd be able to get him round. I had no fear. He was a man of genuine goodwill, very unpredictable, but I had no great worries. Everybody else was worried stiff.

You see, you haven't understood me at all. You think I have moods or fears, whereas I have none. I have the most ludicrous self-confidence. I'm the chap who can't be wrong—everybody else is wrong. Only they have a chance that they're going to be able to agree with me. And I've got a very unattractive side to my character in this way.

Therefore, I was never apprehensive. I was apprehensive for other people. I was apprehensive for the Cabinet when I came back to India. I thought they were lucky that I was going to put them right. I have that to this day.

Q. *Were you relieved when Gandhi put his finger to his lips to indicate it was a day of silence?*

A. Well, I knew it would be much easier for me. Thank God,

I said to myself, a day of silence.

You know, another thing is, I'm not a great premeditator. My forte is improvisation. I get a reaction from people. My dialogues with Jinnah were not monologues. For what it's worth, people know when they come to talk with me, that I'm prepared to listen and answer back and discuss it. I've never sent for people to hear what I have to say. And with Gandhi, it developed like that, and he liked that very much.

Q. *He came to you instinctively?*

A. I think so. I really tried to get him to understand that this plan was giving the people of India the option. The Constituent Assemblies were going to vote, assembly by assembly, whether they wished to have a unified India, or a partition, and, if a partition, whether they also wanted to have the provinces partitioned. And this satisfied him to a very large extent. It was better than he thought.

He didn't realize they were going to have this option although he knew that voting was going to go along, and hence I called it the Gandhi Plan, and he said, "You must do what the people of India want", and so forth.

He wasn't too difficult to deal with and, you see, with it all I knew he was fond of me, he was quite extraordinarily, emotionally affectionate. He really came in oozing pleasure.

The funny part is, they all became that way, eventually, even old Patel, at the end. He broke down and wept when I said goodbye in June 1948.

They had an astonishing emotional attachment. I had one too, for them, but I had to share mine with so many, and they were all concentrated on me, an extraordinary thing, and, of course, on my wife and on my daughter.

I can't explain the thing. Nobody could ever possibly recapture the absolutely astonishing emotion. The whole

thing was emotion. The whole of the farewell in June 1948—the whole crowd when we drove away in state, and one of the six horses jibbed, it was the nearside leader I think, and he had to be unhitched and another horse taken out so that we would go on. The crowd rushed up and said, "Even the horse won't take you—stop—this is a sign from God, you must remain!" That sort of thing . . .

Q. *What would the consequences have been had Gandhi said "No"?*

A. They would have been very serious indeed, because it would have put Congress on the spot They would then have had publicly to separate from Gandhi. I think they might have done it, but I was determined this wasn't going to happen.

Don't forget Krishna Menon and V.P. Menon were my . . . spies is the wrong word; they were my contacts, my links. And so I'd got this feeling, right the way through and I was able to nip it in the bud. And if I hadn't had these links, I shouldn't have known in time. No. It would have been very difficult.

And Gandhi was quite capable of doing it. That's the sort of puckish quality he had, which made it so difficult. The only difference was that, whereas former negotiators had thought the only person they had to placate, and get along with was Gandhi, I came to the conclusion that, really, they were all on my side against him. That was the interesting thing. That gave me a great feeling of strength in dealing with him.

Q. *When you were told by Krishna Menon that Gandhi was going to denounce your plan at his prayer meeting, did you decide to take urgent action?*

A. Yes. I said he must come and see me before the prayer meeting. I knew that he would realize that I knew what he was

up to. And he wouldn't have let me down. That would have been a gross act of disloyalty and lack of friendship, and he wouldn't have done that—he had to come.

Q. *How did you send for him?*

A. Oh, I always sent an officer round to try to see him. Somebody went right round. You see it's very difficult to realize . . . the position of the Viceroy was so—not just all-powerful, but whatever he said absolutely went, everything stopped.

It would be unthinkable for Gandhi not to accept my invitation to come and see me. It wouldn't enter his mind. It's difficult for you to believe this. I mean, he might denounce me at the prayer meeting, but he would not fail to come when I asked him to. Nobody ever did.

You see, what was so bad for me, having been Supreme Commander and then Viceroy, I eventually got megalomania. I could see it coming. That's why I was so keen to go right back into junior ranks and be a naval officer again. Because, everyone keeps on telling you how marvellous you are. You get this adulation, but it does help to carry through that point. That's absolutely true. But after that you've got to come back to earth again. It's frightfully bad for you.

To come back to Gandhi, I knew he wasn't happy after the day of silence discussions. Well, of course, he came in; he was rather a jovial creature, like a little sort of bird, popping about, you know, and he was obviously emotionally, deeply upset—absolutely all crumpled up and huddled up. "Oh it's so awful," lamenting and raising his hands and speaking in a low voice. What is he going to say in his prayer meeting? That he was worried about the whole thing.

And I then started off the idea of saying, well, you can tell them it's the Gandhi Plan. And he was very surprised, and I said, "Well, because you wanted the people to choose. The salient

point you've got to make is that this plan gives them the right, through their elected representatives, to choose what they want."

I said, "You don't want to impose your will against that, do you?" So, bit by bit, we got the thing round. The main thing, you see, was the voice of God, which I also had access to . . .

**Q.** *So the atmosphere was positive when he left the room.*

**A.** Well, I knew he wasn't going to let me down. I was very much reassured by that thing, and I told him, I said, "You know, I don't need to tell you because you know that I am as keen as you to try and keep the unification of India, and if by some miracle the Constituent Assemblies vote for this, we've got what you want. And if they don't agree, I'm sure you wouldn't wish us to oppose them with force of arms." He could be talked around.

**Q.** *Newspapers of that time—April 29—mention untouchability to be abolished.*

**A.** Of course. The Hindus didn't want that. You see, the real caste Hindus wallowed in untouchability—it made them important. And untouchability was horrible. There were 60 million, you know. If the shadow of an untouchable fell across his food, he had to throw the food away. The whole thing was absolutely extraordinary.

They didn't want this, and they haven't really got rid of it now. They've got people like Jagjivan Ram who is now Minister of Defence, a very important position, who's had 25 years to overcome the disability of untouchability.

It's still in all the villages and so forth; it's not yet cured. It'll take a long time to eradicate it.

**Q.** *The burden to draw the boundary lines of partition fell upon a*

*British judge named Sir Cyril Radcliffe. Did you believe Radcliffe would have the time to produce his award before the date yau imposed on him. August 10?*

A. No. By the 13th or 14th maybe. When I realized he was going to produce the thing so near to the final day, I knew that whatever he did was going to be violently attacked by both sides, if it came out on the day of Independence. It would kill any hope of good feeling and goodwill. I felt it would be much better to let them have the joy of their independence day, and then face the misery after the situation. It couldn't be on the day itself, it might have been a day or two earlier. If it had been five days or a week earlier it might have helped. A day or two wouldn't have made any difference.

Q. *Did Radcliffe make a plea for one or two years to make his award the right way?*

A. Yes, I absolutely remember this conversation. I went further. I said I am in no illusions about the pressure you are under. He asked for more time, but I explained why I couldn't give it to him. The only instructions he had from me was the date. All I wanted him to do was meet the time-table. I didn't want anybody to twist around, or people could think I could twist around. He was an upright, proud, frigid, haughty British judge.

I told him he was not to take defence considerations under judgement in making the award.

When the Indian leaders began to read that award in the Viceroy's Council Chambers like exam papers I was handing around, the noises of indignation, I told myself, with some relief, seemed to be about equal from both sides. **None of them thanked Radcliffe for the thing he'd given them they only hated him for the thing he hadn't given them.**

**I'll tell you something ghastly. The reasons behind his award weren't very deep-seated at all. I am quite certain they were based on some rule of thumb about the proportion of population. I don't think it ever entered his mind that it would have the future impact it did on Kashmir.**

In my original discussion with him I said, "It's up to you, but basically I hope you're going to get the right population on the right side of the line. But the line must make some sense. It is possible for people to move in small quantities to the right side of the line, but if you make it an impossible line to work along, there'll be trouble. We need the best national boundary line you can find without doing violence to the population."

Q. *Do you have any comment on General Habibullah's effort to get Indian officers to oppose partition?*

A. It was after the announcement. It was too late. Nothing could be done. If they'd seen Auchinleck, preferably before I announced Partition, there'd have been some hope. But this way, the die was cast. There was no way the army could force the political leaders. There was one man they had to force, Jinnah. Maybe if all the Muslim senior officers had gone to see Jinnah, that might have had some effect. It was interesting, but too late.

**One of the things that Jinnah grossly miscalculated was, he was convinced that I would split India into Hindustan and Pakistan. I didn't know that the Indians had intended to ask me for the continuation of India, inheriting all the previous things, and that Pakistan should be thrown out. It was a must, Jinnah was absolutely furious when he found out they were going to call themselves India. It was a very good idea.**

The real body blow to Pakistan was Menon's idea of India inheriting everything. They were the successor state and Pakistan was to leave them and there was no way Jinnah could get

around that. Now, that was one of the things that made people begin to think that Pakistan was not going to be viable and wouldn't survive.

Q. *You were strongly in favour of a united Bengal. Did you believe that partition, if it had to come, would be best not in two, but three parts?*

A. Yes, this would have been a solution and would indeed be the Bangladesh solution we now have. You see, what went wrong was that I realized India was not going to let Calcutta go. Now, funnily enough, the Governor of Bengal, dear old Fred Burrows, would have backed me to the hilt. I'd told him it was a good idea because they would then come closer together. I think India disagreed over the fact that it would weaken the centre. You'd have Pakistan and they felt—mind you, they were idiotic because Pakistan then would only be East Pakistan. I liked the idea very much. If you ask me why it went wrong, you'll have to check the records. I'm sure the Congress Party wanted it thrown out.

I still think, in many ways, it was a better idea. I can see why they wouldn't accept it, but it was worth trying. All the Bengalis were mad keen on it. I was pursuing every feasible alternative I could think of. I was terribly keen not to have fragmentation. Bengal was 60 million—as big as the British Isles. All the other places were a few odd million. They were not a potentially viable nation as Bengal was. It would have stayed in the British Commonwealth. It had a lot to recommend.

But I saw the dangers, and I wasn't surprised when Congress said, "No". But I couldn't turn them down. In retrospect, in view of Bangladesh, it's interesting how right I was to try and keep them together.

**Q.** *Would it be reasonable to say Congress exercised a veto over the creation of an independent Bengal?*

**A.** Yes, I think it would be fair.

**Q.** *This brings up the similar situation later in North West Frontier Province where Congress wanted an independence option on the vote.*

**A.** I vetoed that because it was a very small part geographically, with a population of only five million people or something like that.

They wouldn't let me do it when it made sense in Bengal; how could they expect me, therefore, to let them have whichever way suited them in NWFP?

Jinnah couldn't have accepted, it would have completely blown the agreement. Congress wouldn't accept an independent Bengal which made perfect sense. Why should Jinnah hand over an independent NWFP when a straight vote would give it to him?

Therefore, I couldn't let Congress play on that.

**Q.** *Could we discuss in detail August 13, 14, 15, beginning with your departure to Karachi? A memo from Lady Louis reads, "My husband and I flew down on afternoon of 13th to Karachi to bid godspeed to Pakistan."*

**A.** The crowd was very interesting on the way from the airport. It had come for us, not for Jinnah. Make no mistake—we were very popular in Pakistan until the politicians turned them against us.

It was a very funny feeling, driving back from the Independence ceremony through a crowd of cheering enthusiastic people, saying as much "Mountbatten Zindabad!" as "Jinnah

Zindabad!" My wife was just behind me. All the way through I was looking and wondering, who's the chap who's going to throw a bomb? **I had been warned by my CID that there would be an attempt to kill Jinnah during the parade.** We travelled very slowly in an open Rolls Royce. When we got back, the tension broke, and the old boy, for the first and the only time in his life, became emotional and put his hand on my knee and said, "Thank God, I've brought you back alive!", I said, "Thank God, *you* brought me? *I've* brought you back alive!"

Q. *Did you have any special precautions, security officers?*

A. Well, the Governor of Bengal's Military Secretary got the George Medal for catching the bomb and throwing it back. I was never a very good catch, as a cricketer . . .

Q. *Did you see any odd movements, gestures along the way?*

A. No. We both looked, but we didn't. The tension was pretty bad, but it broke when we got back. Jinnah became all soft. He really was sweet, the old boy, pathetic.

Q. *And during the ride he was tense?*

A Very. But he was tense all his life. Very reserved and very naughty. Typical.

Q. *Did it seem like the longest ride you ever took?*

A. Certainly the most intense. Remember, one had to be smiling, ha—ha—put on an act of gaiety. "Wonderful day! Come on! Throw the bomb, get on with it!" That's really the point.

Q. *How long did the ride take?*

**A.** Oh, let's say 24 hours!

**Q.** *Jinnah made a speech at the banquet, after having said he would not.*

**A.** Jinnah, I think, did it deliberately. He gave the most certain assurance there'd be no speeches, because he wanted his speech to hit the high-spots. That's my opinion. He'd hardly ever seen me before, but if there's one thing I'm good at, it is improvising on my feet, at the moment, and so, far from being worse, it was the better for it, because he read every word and I'd obviously got nothing in front of me at all. I started off, "I speak from the heart. Mr. Jinnah's caught me by surprise. I never expected this wonderful tribute but although I wasn't expecting to have to speak, I can't now refrain." That sort of stuff. Off it went. I really hit it for six, it absolutely rebounded, because if he'd warned me I should have got really worried and tried to write out the sort of thing that would not have gone so well.

**Q.** *Was there a sense of irony when he praised your contribution to the creation of Pakistan?*

**A.** Absolutely, and afterwards, they abused me the whole time for having done so.

One other thing, you do notice that he proposed the King Emperor's health? The last time he did it himself, I believe, and behaved very well and correctly, all the way through.

You see, he never unbent. I say he unbent to the extent of putting his hand on my knee, because the tension had been so great that he completely relaxed, and really broke down and was human. And then, I think, rather regretted being human and came back into his shell all right, again. When I say he was affable, he was really condescending: he was a great man, he

could afford to be gracious and condescending – very friendly, but . . .

**Q.** *After the parade, was this the first and only time of such contact with Jinnah?*

**A.** He dropped the mask, yes. It came off, he couldn't hold it. Well, you can imagine, getting back without being killed was quite an adventure!

**Q.** *What about his sister Fatima?*

**A.** A funny woman. My wife looked after her marvellously, and got her to unbend a bit, and speak.

My wife stole a large part of the thunder because she exuded absolute knock-down charm; she was the most beautiful creature, lovely figure, and really sparkled; really had a champagne quality about her, which I've never had, or even wanted to. It helped enormously to get things going, particularly among the ladies. She was a great, great asset.

Pamela was much more of an asset than you'd realize. As a young girl of 17, she really came straight from school. She was so genuine and unaffected and natural, and rather diffident and shy, that she had a great effect on the young people there.

Anyway, I confirm that my wife absolutely melted Fatima Jinnah. She embraced my wife when we left, it was a natural gesture of warm affection. No, we un-gummed them for that day, but it absolutely closed down like icicles when we left. He was intolerable to his own people.

**Q.** *How was Jinnah's hospitality at Government House?*

**A.** Fairly simple. Government House was small in scale, but the big rooms were very stately, and the ceremonial was correct,

the dinner was good, everything was frightfully well done. There's no doubt, they really took trouble.

Q. *The ceremony of August 15 had no percedent. Who invented, engineered it?*

A. Well, I discussed it with Nehru. The first and most amusing thing, of course, is that I had selected August 15 because it was the date of the Japanese surrender—which had only taken place, don't forget, two years before—but I hadn't consulted the astrologers.

As you know, the Indians are riddled with astrology. I didn't realize it. On an inauspicious day one could do nothing. Well, Nehru didn't believe in astrology but, he said, so many people did, and I'd chosen an unpropitious day. I suppose it was silly of me not to consult the astrologers, but I'd forgotten.

He said, "Never mind. If you agree that we can have a midnight meeting and just before midnight strikes, we'll transfer power, that'll be all the more auspicious." And I thought—what a marvellous, dramatic idea, having that midnight meeting while the rest of the world sleeps—as you'll remember. . . . This was done, *not* because we wanted a dramatic moment, but because I'd chosen the wrong day! Because the astrologers said the day wasn't propitious!

Several of the Indian governors wrote to me and said, "I'm honoured to accept Your Excellency's invitation to become governor of—U.P. or whatever it was—but I've consulted my astrologer, and he will not let me travel on the day you've chosen."

I replied, "Very well. You can travel any day you like before that, and go to a local hotel and wait!"

Q. *Was there an official Government astrologer?*

A. No, of course not. There are plenty of astrologers to tell you what is a propitious or unpropitious day. It's quite a trade in India. Mind you, the British are nearly as stupid. In several of their papers they'll tell you under what sign of the Zodiac you were born, and what you have to do, so it's an amusing thing. . .

We started off, therefore, with a very dramatic midnight meeting. And I sat there, signing the last telegrams as a Viceroy, and then Nehru came in, as the man I'd chosen as Prime Minister, and the President of the Congress Party, who was really the President of the Assembly, Rajendra Prasad. And I wouldn't have a lot of photographers, perhaps there were one or two in.

And Rajendra then said, "I've come from the Assembly to invite you . . . to say that by an overwhelming . . . by an absolutely unanimous wish of the whole Assembly, that you should be the first Head of State of our freely elected India"—which, if you come to think of it, was quite an honour.

And so I said, "I'd be very honoured to do so, to do my best as a good Indian."

Then Nehru said, "And you, Sir, have chosen me as your Prime Minister, and here is the Cabinet, which I submit to you" —and he gave me an envelope. (I've got a photograph of his giving me the envelope). When I opened it up there was an entirely blank sheet of paper! For a very simple reason. When I sent him off, he said, "You and I have been through this so often, it doesn't matter. You and I have agreed who it's going to be."

After the Indians had decided to ask me to stay as their own Governor-General, Gandhi had come to see me, and he had said. "I wanted to tell you how thrilled I am that the Congress Party should have asked you to stay on as the Head of State. I don't need to tell you that that's a very brave decision on their part, which I know will be backed; after all, who could

have envisaged five months ago that, having got rid of the hated British, we should ask the last Viceroy to be our President?"

He added, "It's a very remarkable thing—more remarkable than you realize, but I can tell you how difficult it is to get it through. But I can also tell you it's going to be successful. The whole country's going to be for this.

"But you must, please, give an example. We're a poor country. The British ruled by tremendous show of panoply and ceremony and all that, the Viceroy built up something so important that people hardly dared even look at him. If you are Head of State you must come down and be humble, and live in a small house with your wife—be accessible, like I."

I said, "And what do we do with this magnificent house, which cost a fortune to build?"

"Ah, that," he said, "should be turned into a hospital."

I said, "If you go and see my wife she'll tell you, because she's an expert, that the last thing one can do is to make it into a hospital—it just is not built the shape or way for it."

"You must find some use for it," he said. "You must move out, as an example. We must all live on a much lower scale."

I said, "Well now, look—we're only just on the point. We haven't even got to the transfer of power yet. Leave it alone, and in a month, come and see me and we'll discuss it again."

He came back a month later, when the riots were on, and the massacres. I then, in fact, had used Government House, (the Viceroy's House,) as my H.Q. The Viceroy's Executive Council Chamber was used as the main meeting room of the Emergency Committee. I took Lord Ismay's study and turned it into a maproom, just like at war, with all the Intelligence up. And he was shown round this and he said, "My friend, I am glad you listened to the voice of God, and not to the voice of Gandhi."

"Well, Mr Gandhi," I said, "He's the only person whose

voice I'd sooner listen to than yours. . ." The interesting point is, one could talk quite seriously like this. "But," I added, "in what respect did I take God's advice against yours?"

"God must have told you not to listen to old Gandhi, who's a fool. This must never be given up. This is the heart of India. Here is where India is governed from. And now it must be kept up, all your successors must live here."

I said, "May I quote you?"

"Yes!"

"And of course, when I said that Gandhi wanted the Head of State to continue to live there, it settled everything. It meant to say, first of all, that all the pensioners and all the servants were settled—they are all privately engaged, they weren't Government servants. And I said, "You mustn't reduce the staff. It's no good living in a palace and having one caretaker coming in every day with a bucket and a broom—I mean, you've got to live at the same rate, and you must keep them in their same liveries, have as many guns . . ." And they agreed. And I said, "This is how people will judge you."

All they asked, all the way through, was that they shouldn't have to live in the sitting-rooms and bedrooms. They used them all as public rooms, and they all went to tiny little poky rooms upstairs where they liked living, sitting on the floor, that sort of thing, and this was what we did to that house.

Q. *The actual moment of the independence of India—can you recall your thoughts?*

A. Well, I knew what was going on. I had had to agree to it, in fact I had found the solution with Nehru about the midnight hour, and it was rather dramatic, you know. "At the stroke of the midnight hour, while the world sleeps . . ." You remember that speech, marvellous.

It was very, very hot. I had a white dinner-jacket on, and I

was just very relaxed. There was nothing more that I could do and I was under the illusion that I was now going to sit back and be a Constitutional Governor-General, acting only on their advice, and occasionally answering questions if they got lost! **I had absolutely no idea that it was going to be a bloody sight worse after the transfer of power, than before—no idea of what I was in for!**

I'd been working at very high speed. The atmosphere in India was extraordinary, every moment was spent on something, and yet—this is important—one must always give the impression that one is not rushed, that one's got all the time in the world for everybody when they come in. I never got down to things quickly. I never spoke in a hurry. I asked the social sort of questions first, like what they'd been doing the day before, and how they were. The whole thing was very much like an after-dinner conversation, never any atmosphere of business, no pressure. In fact, I wouldn't even let people bring in bits of paper with notes on what they wanted to say. I said, "No, I have none, you must have none!" We spoke just like I'm talking to you now. And this had an entirely different effect on them from anything they'd had before; they were always used to dealing with papers, agendas, briefs and so on, and it really disarmed them. They were quite unprepared.

So one had to appear to be very easy, but there was no moment left unfilled. Ask Alan Campbell-Johnson. You'll find he used to come and see me in the bath—the one time he could read papers to me. And it went on and on, and very late in the evening, 1 or 2 in the morning, I'd do perhaps half an hour on the relationship tables* to unwind, before I went to bed.

Q. *What was your very last act as Viceroy of India?*

*Mountbatten had been working for some time on a genealogical tree of his family

A. My very last act as Viceroy took place a few minutes before midnight. It's quite an amusing story. I'll recall it for you because I know you love these kind of anecdotes.

In 1921, the heir to the Nawab of Pallanpore was on the Prince of Wales' staff, where I got to know him very well, and I liked him. By the time I came back as Supreme Commander, he'd succeeded his father and he was the ruler. He invited me down to Pallanpore and we went down. The war must just have been over. I wouldn't have gone during the war. I went and I took Patricia, who was then a signals officer on my staff, and I took my military ADC who was Lord Brabourne. (There was, at that time, no indication that he intended to marry her, certainly none that she was going to accept him.)

While we were there, the Resident, a man called Craft, said to me, "May I intercede on behalf of the ruler. He's got this charming Australian wife—very dark-skinned, very like a Muslim, always wears the sari and has adopted all the customs in every way. But unlike the other Begums she's actually got great intelligence and great initiative, and she's doing wonderful welfare work. But the Viceroy won't give her the title of Highness, which is disastrous, because it puts her in the wrong. . ."

I said, "What's that?"

He said, "I approached the Viceroy on behalf of my Ruler, and the Viceroy put it up to the Secretary of State for India in London, who said that this couldn't be done, because it would, in fact, destroy the whole basis on which ruling Princes were supported; it would be bad if anybody could marry a foreign wife and she could be made a Highness. So they wouldn't agree."

So I had a talk with the Nawab, who told me it would be a great thing if I could do something about it. I said, "Well, I'll do my best, I'll intervene."

I saw Wavell personally, who explained that he'd already put it up to the Secretary of State for India, and it had been turned

down, after much thought by the legal pandits. It couldn't be done.

So I wrote to the Resident, Craft and said, "I'm very sorry, but I've failed on this—will you explain to your Ruler that the Viceroy has explained this cannot be done. Very sorry. Although I'm personally for it, she cannot be made a Highness."

That's that. Now, time passes, and it's now a good year later, in '47. I arrived out in India, and one of the first rulers to see me was the Nawab of Pallanpore. Sir George Abell put in a note and said, "Please beware. His Highness of Pallanpore is almost certain to ask you to make his wife a Highness. This has been turned down by the Secretary of State in London, and therefore Your Excellency is in no position to grant this request."

Now it's the 14th of August, a few minutes before midnight, and I'd really finished my papers, pretty well. I was sitting in my study with nothing to do and I said to myself, "For still a few minutes I am the most powerful man on earth; nobody else, that I know of, controls a machine which has the power of life and death over one-fifth of humanity."

So, I thought, how can I use my power? "God!" I said, "I know! I'll make the old Begum of Pallanpore a Highness." So I called the experts, who said I couldn't do it. I said, "Who says I can't do it? Now, get a parchment immediately, I want a man sent in to illuminate it." You know. "Greetings. Know by these presents that we, by the grace of God, so and so, do in fact raise to the dignity of Highness. . . ." And I signed it and sent it off to the Resident to give to the Nawab. Of course, the Nawab was delighted, the Begum was delighted and the Resident was absolutely lyrical.

**Q.** *Did you have anything to put away before midnight, which was symbolic of the passing of Viceroyalty?*

A. Well, there were the boxes, nothing very much beyond the despatch boxes. They were red, like an ordinary box. With a handle in the middle, a lock in front. I think they had "H.E. The Viceroy" with the King Emperor's badge.

But did anyone ever tell you the astonishing trouble that was taken to try and give the Viceroy of India a separate identity, never permitted to any other Governor-General? Every Governer-General and Governor throughout the British Empire (and there were a great many), everything they had, wore the King's arms. The Royal Cypher, the Crowns, and so on. Not so the Viceroy. He had his own absolute personality, his own coat-of-arms, it was my cypher which was worn by all the servants. And there was an organization by which cigar bands had it printed on them; every cigar when it arrived, had its own band taken off, and the Viceroy's band put on. Match-boxes had it stuck on. The butter was imprinted with the cypher. And the soap. Every single thing you can think of, was the Viceroy's.

Q. *People were amazed at the speed of your transition to Governor-General from Viceroy. . .*

A. Everything was ready to occur at midnight. We swapped the thing over, we pulled down the Union Jack and put up the blue Governor-General's flag which I had, myself, more or less designed.

Q. *Did you pull down the flag yourself?*

A. No, it happened automatically. The flag changed to a dark-blue flag with a golden cypher.

Q. *Did you go down and watch the flag come down?*

A. No, no, it happened at midnight. The Indian flag was hoisted

at the Colour Ceremony. I insisted that the Union Jack should not be hauled down. There was a bare flag-pole on which this was hoisted. The Union Jack didn't disappear, don't forget. It was still used, on holidays and great days and even now, they very often fly the Union Jack. You can see the flag of the last Viceroy of India in the Romsey Abbey: the Union Jack with the Star of India in the middle. That was hauled down at midnight and replaced by the dark blue flag with the cypher.

Q. *Do you remember Nehru's toast that night?*

A. I do remember. But he said "King George the Sixth," *not* the King of England. It's a crucial difference. He's being a loyal dominion leader.

I said then, "To India."

Considering he never drank, to drink port at 2 in the morning, in a toast to the King, at the dawn of India's independence, was quite something.

Q. *Do you remember your drive to Parliament, in your state carriage, that historical morning of August 15?*

A. Absolutely extraordinary. We had started off with the utmost pomp of which we were capable, and I was determined that we'd go down with colours flying very high, and the whole works was turned on. I went in full dress, in whites, with everything one could lay on. The sash of the Garter, the Stars of the former Principal Orders, decorations, medals, everything you can think of, sword, full-dress belt. And my wife was also dressed up to the nines, and we drove down to Parliament.

Q. *It was hot?*

A. Hot? I should say it was probably between 100° and 110°.

Pretty hot. The bodyguard were in their white tropical uniforms, with their big boots and their puggarees and their spurs. We started off in fine style. We were seen off by all the high officials; those members of the staff who weren't down already, were there to see us off—if I remember right, we had three guards of honour, of 100 each, army, navy and air force—and we drove off to the strains of *God Save The King* and a 31-gun salute.

We drove through. As you'll see, there's quite a long drive within the gates before you come. And then, as we came out of the gates, we came into the main road and already a crowd had begun. They got thicker and thicker and, by the time we turned towards the Parliament building, it was so thick, as far as I could see it was a crowd of madly enthusiastic people—of course, we got infected with the excitement. They were pleased, we were pleased, it was a wonderful day. The sun was high in the heaven.

Q. *You had an enormous sense of relief and achievement?*

A. This was the great moment and it looked as if, no clould in the sky yet, no idea of these migrations. We'd got there. It was a close race, we just pulled it off. The people were so overjoyed, they shouted, "Zindabad—ki jai!" Then we had, "Mountbatten ki jai! Lady Mountbatten ki jai! Pamela Mountbatten ki jai!"—Great crowd.

It got more and more dense, more exciting. In fact if it hadn't been for those very well-trained patient horses of the bodyguard, we'd never have got through. The bodyguard literally, slowly, ploughed their way through the crowd that gave way to them, and we arrived.

When we arrived, our guard of honour—of, I think, 100 sailors—had already been completely swamped and were now busy trying to keep the crowd back. When we went in, I told the Military Secretary, "Look, the guard's due to be relieved

by, I think, the air force (only one guard at a time). Don't let the naval guard go away. Tell them to ground arms. And when the air force guard arrives, tell them to ground arms, and they are to link arms and try and keep some sort of opening otherwise we won't get out of this place. Above all," I said, "I want a passage" (I always used to give details) "down the stairs each side, up to the Cabinet, and the bodyguard must be formed up in escort well ahead, so that there's a way clear, well ahead of us."

Well, when we came out, they'd gone completely mad. They were out of control. So I said to Nehru, "What are we going to do now? These are your countrymen," and he said, "I'll talk to them. I'll go up on the roof."

So he went up on the roof of the porch, stood up there and started haranguing them saying, "Go on, make room," etc., and he managed to get some sort of movement going on the ground.

Meanwhile we just managed to squeeze between the lines of the guards of honour, who were then linking arms, and get into the carriage which moved very, very slowly, while Nehru screamed and shouted, and harangued them, and shook his fist, and waved at them. And we pressed our way very, very slowly through.

And, of course, the people were scrambling on board, trying to shake hands, things the Indians had never done before. It was very, very exciting.

But that was only a small foretaste of the flag-raising ceremony in the afternoon. We went down, and there it was absolutely extraordinary.

It is difficult to exaggerate the numbers of people involved — you couldn't estimate to the nearest 10,000 anyway—there were hundreds of thousands. The entire place we'd chosen for the flag-raising ceremony, which I'd helped to choose because it was a great, wide open space with lots of room, was com-

pletely swamped.

I remember the guard of honour was the First Sikh Regiment, a very famous regiment. They have bright scarlet puggarees, all men of about six feet tall. They were still fallen in, and you could see a row of bright red puggarees, completely swamped. They weren't going to move by the swaying and pressure of the crowd.

The mast was there and the flag was ready to be hoisted. I'd gone with my wife, and I think people like Peter Howes* rode behind us—in full dress—and when we got there, I realized at once that there was absolutely no question of the elaborate ceremonial being carried out. We drove up to the grandstand very, very slowly, advanced by inches, and then I realized there was nothing on.

I tried to get in touch with people, and the General in command pushed his way through with the Prime Minister, and I said, "Where's Pammie?"

He said, "Well, she's here, she's all right. I've got people looking after her, but you'd better take her back with you."

I said, "All right." So she was passed, almost over the heads of the crowds into the carriage. And I said, "Now let's just hoist that flag! And then drive away. No question of playing. The band's swamped, the guard is swamped, let's just do that. I'll stand up and salute and wave."

So this is what we did. This unbelievable thing happened—as I went out of there, there'd been this sort of rainbow—suddenly, this bright, brilliant rainbow came out, which was only seen by people facing it—the people with their backs to it never saw it at the time; and Pamela was one of those who had a chance to see it.

But this rainbow that suddenly sprang up, of course, it was a marvellous omen . . . in fact, though it's rather far-fetched,

*Lord Mountbatten's ADC.

the Indian colours, which are a horizontal tricolour of white, orange and green . . . so, when one had a certain rainbow—it was framed in this great circle, a complete arc. Then, of couse, people went absolutely mad.

We'd moved off by then, and my wife was busy lifting in people for fear of their being crushed—women—children . . . Nehru sat on the hood. The crowd continued, I should think, for nearly half a mile, extraordinary. They were only supposed to be in one place—frightfully exciting, and we got tremendously moved and uplifted.

Q. *Were people amazed to find themselves in your carriage?*

A. Yes! But it made the party—it immediately made it matey and gay; it removed all Royal pomp, although I'd originally intended to have that, it made it like a great big picnic party that everyone enjoyed. The goodwill was oozing out. I've never known such enthusiasm, quite unbelievable, people were beside themselves.

The reception in the evening was also a great emotional event, because so many people came who had practically never been in the Viceroy's House. And everybody there was pleased. The British and all. There was no snootiness that day. What struck me most was the immense, emotional, tearful sort of thrill of enthusiasm, of gratitude. "Thank you for coming out and giving us our freedom"—that sort of thing. "How wonderful it is, we shall never forget the British Raj, we owe you all so much and now this is your greatest act." Many remarks of that sort because, don't forget, many of the people there were very serious-minded people. It was a very moving experience.

That night, when my wife and I were left alone, we had a most emotional embrace. We were locked in each other's arms with tears streaming down our faces, from sheer emotion and happiness.

Don't forget . . . . I want to point out something to you. I've had my moments. After all, it's no mean thing to take the surrender of three-quarter of a million Japanese, and have all these little Nips surrendering to you, you know, and to see all the liberated people in Singapore. It was the same sort of thing again. Though there, mark you, there, my wife and I agreed, she'd come out to help with prisoners of war, and I said, "This is not a woman's part, there are no women in the whole affair at all," and she said, "Well, I'll stay", and she stayed with the prisoners of war who had been released, stayed outside the door of the actual room in which the surrender took place, and only just listened to my order of the day from the steps. Because she had no place in Singapore, she didn't ask for a place; but she was there and I made sure she got a good view of it.

But of course in the case of the transfer of power, like the King and Queen, she had her own place. We had a separate throne for her, which you'll probably see. It's very difficult to explain, but when you're writing about this you should bear in mind that, although this was no new experience, in that exactly the same thing had happened at the surrender in Singapore—this was quite different. This was no surrender. This was nothing but joy on both sides. There were no Japanese, no losers; we could all rejoice together. This business of having got this marvellous feeling that you get at the end of a war, when both sides have won!

That's the point.

*Part II*

# REPORTS

*A selection of personal and official documents on the partition of India, March 22-August 15, 1947*

In the course of the preparation of *Freedom at Midnight* we perused close to 900 kgs. of documents and papers which helped us to substantiate, corroborate, or eventually reject each of the hundreds of oral testimonies we had collected.

One of the most precious collections we had access to, was the personal archives of the last Viceroy of India. During his whole life Lord Mountbatten had meticulously kept every single piece of paper relating to himself and his family. In fact, because of his royal connections and the supreme offices he had held they became, in a sense, a record of British and European history, and to a certain extent, of the world itself since the beginning of this century. Stored in a neat array of steel cabinets the archives occupied the whole basement of Mountbatten's Broadlands mansion in the south of England. Three full-time clerks attended them.

For historians like us, the discovery of that basement was like a trip in Alibaba's cave. Each drawer of each cabinet contained a treasure. One of them was full of the menus of the banquets which had attended some or other occasion of Mountbatten's life. Another drawer was full of heaps of old, torn envelopes covered with pencilled writing. Amused by our astonished faces, Mountbatten revealed to us that the author of these messages was Gandhi himself. And he told us a marvellous story. "When I landed in New Delhi on March 22, 1947 to find an urgent solution to the subcontinent's dilemma," he explained, "I immediately understood that nothing could ever be achieved without Gandhi's consent. He was in fact the key to the problem. I

then learned something extraordinary: each Monday the Mahatma would observe a day of silence to purify his vocal chords. I saw in that practice a sign of my good fortune and I took the immediate decision to engage my negotiations with Gandhi on Mondays only. But the old Mahatma was prepared for all eventualities. Tucked in his dhoti, he kept a stack of old envelopes which he used as stationery, and a tiny bit of pencil. As soon as he felt the least disagreement over somthing I was saying, he hurried to scribble a message on one of his old envelopes and handed it over to me." Twenty-five years later in the Broadlands basement we were looking at these historical messages which constituted an invaluable source of information on the Father of the Nation's feelings and inner thoughts at the most critical juncture of modern Indian history.

Other cabinets contained a collection of the memos Mountbatten dictated after every one of his meetings in the inner sanctum of his study, facing Lutyens' Moghul Gardens. No aide or secretary was ever present during these meetings, but as soon as his visitors had left him, Mountbatten would call in a stenographer and dictate to him a full report of the conversation he had just had. Most of these memos were also full of details and colour. The fact that they had been written on the spot made them fantastic source material. Other documents consisted of secret reports and letters that the last Viceroy and the first Governor-General had sent to his cousin, the King of England, and the Secretary of State for India in London.

These documents, with their matter of factness, shed vital light on the shaping of this distant moment of history. For historians like us, accustomed to probing, checking and corroborating all oral evidence, they were of invaluable assistance. It is our hope that they will also help all those eager to know more about this glorious moment in the long and great history of India.

LARRY COLLINS
DOMINIQUE LAPIERRE

## SECTION 1: PRELUDE TO PARTITION

### A. THE PARTITION PLAN

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 1 April 2, 1947**

### VICEROY'S COVERING LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE*

I was interested to read your views about the time table for the whole operation of transferring power in June 1948. I had already come to the conclusion here that a decision about what we are going to do would have to be taken at a considerably earlier date than we envisaged during our talks in London. I quite understand the point you make about the time required to prepare and get through Parliament the necessary legislation, but I hope whatever is decided that it will be possible to make an announcement of our intentions at an early date before legislation is introduced.

*Frederick William Pethic-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India and Burma, 1945-47 and Member of the Cabinet Mission to India in 1946.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 2 April 9, 1947**

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11. After my last interview with Mr. Gandhi on April 4 I arranged for him to spend an hour with Ismay in order that the salient features of his scheme might be reduced to writing. This was done, but in two letters to Ismay Mr. Gandhi has affected to be most disappointed and has taken the line that the object of these talks was to produce a formal *draft agreement* and not a mere summary. In other words he was hoping for a Mountbatten-Gandhi pact! I have written to him making it clear that at the present stage I have no intention of making up my mind on the solution I propose to recommend for it would be premature to prepare any cut and dried plan even in draft form. He has accepted my rebuff very gracefully.

12. I saw Mr. Jinnah first on Saturday, April 5 when he was in a most frigid, haughty and disdainful frame of mind. He started off by informing me that he had come to tell me exactly what he was prepared to accept. I said that I did not want to hear anything like that at such an early stage, and that the object of this first interview was merely that we should make each other's acquaintance. He came with his sister to dine alone with my wife and myself on Sunday, April 6, and stayed until well after midnight, and it was only by then that the ice was really broken.

13. Our conversations continued on Monday, April 7, and he continued to give me the background of the negotiations with Mr. Gandhi and the Cabinet Mission. I tried by every means to bring him up to the point of saying that he would accept the Cabinet Mission plan and enter the Constituent Assembly.

14. He pointed out at great length that it was quite valueless entering the Constituent Assembly or even trying to go back to

the Cabinet Mission plan, since the whole bases of the Cabinet Mission plan were that it had to be worked in a spirit of co-operation and mutual trust. In May 1946 there had been some prospect that this atmosphere could be created. Now, nearly a year later, the atmosphere so far from improving had taken a serious turn for the worse, and it was cleàr that in no circumstances did Congress intend to work the plan either in accordance with the spirit or the letter.

15. He said that India had now passed beyond the stage at which any such compromise solution could possibly work: and he categorically called upon me to hand over power as soon as possible, preferably Province by Province, and to let the Provinces themselves choose how they formed into groups. Alternatively, if I preferred it, I could name the groups myself.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 3 April 17, 1947**

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11. I have had six meetings during the past week with Mr. Jinnah, averaging between two to three hours each, and the conversations continued on the lines which I reported last week. He has made it abundantly clear that the Muslim League will not in any circumstances reconsider the Cabinet Mission plan, and he is intent on having Pakistan. I got him to see Ismay and give him his ideas on Pakistan but when Ismay produced the notes he had made, Mr. Jinnah said, "That is your scheme not mine." I told him that if I accepted his arguments on the need for partition of India, then I could not resist the arguments that Congress were putting forward for the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. He was quite horrified and argued at great length on the need to preserve the unity of the Punjab and Bengal, pointing out that the Punjabis and Bengalis regarded their

Provinces as unified territories which they would hate to see split up.

**12.** I told him that I had been so impressed by his arguments that I was prepared to accept them. He was delighted, but only until I pointed out that his arguments had also convinced me that the partition of India itself would be criminal. Then we started going round the mulberry bush again.

**13.** Finally I told him that I had deliberately refrained from discussing the scheme for the transfer of power with any member of Congress except Gandhi, and that I was not adopting the scheme the latter had put up. I said no one had done any propaganda with me; but that I had come to the conclusion myself that what would be best for India would be a complete Union with the strongest possible Central Government. In fact I would like to see the present Interim Government strengthened by his joining it himself, so that I could turn over to the Interim Government in toto in June 1948. If I had invited the Pope to take part in the Black Mass he could not have been more horrified. I hastened to assure him that I should not allow my personal feelings on what was good for India to interfere with working out a solution which would be acceptable to the people of India in their present frame of mind. But I warned him categorically that if I finally decided to recommend to His Majesty's Government that there should be partition, then that principle would be applied right through to the Provinces and that partition would follow the boundaries of the communal majorities; since I was convinced that the non-Muslim communities in the Punjab and Bengal would be just as likely to fight if put under Muslim domination as Muslim Leaguers would be likely to fight under Congress domination.

**14.** I told him that while I remained statutorily responsible,

through the Secretary of State, to HMG and Parliament for the preservation of law and order in India, I would not agree to the partition of the armed forces, which had already been so weakened by nationalisation that they could not possibly stand partition as well. I did however tell him that I would be prepared to have the matter investigated by the Defence Committee if a decision on partition were finally taken.

15. Although Jinnah did not lose his friendly attitude, his arguments became more and more futile, and he ended by saying, "If you persist in chasing me with your ruthless logic we shall get nowhere."

16. I regard Jinnah as a psychopathic case; in fact until I had met him I would not have thought it possible that a man with such a complete lack of administrative knowledge or sense of responsibility could achieve or hold down so powerful a position.

17. I finally pointed out that the most he could hope for from me was to allow Provinces, and where applicable halves of Provinces, to decide whether they wished to join Pakistan. I pointed out that at this rate it looked as though he would get Sind and western Punjab for certain; the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) would be a doubtful starter (and if he got it would cost him 3½ crores a year to keep the tribes quiet). In the east I pointed out that he would get the most useless part of Bengal, without Calcutta, and if he wished it he could have Sylhet back from Assam.

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19. I summed up by pointing out that the choice before him was likely to be:

(i) The Cabinet Mission plan which gave him all five Provinces

of Pakistan with complete autonomy and with only a very weak Centre to which they would owe allegiance for three subjects which might be covered by the general term Defence

or

(ii) A very moth-eaten Pakistan, the eastern and north-west frontier parts of which were unlikely to be economic propositions, and which would still have to come to some Centre for general defence subjects for a long while after we had left.

**20**. He said, "I do not care how little you give me as long as you give it to me completely. I do not wish to make any improper suggestion to you, but you must realise that the new Pakistan is almost certain to ask for dominion status within the Empire." I advised him to address himself to Sir Terence Shone* on this matter, since I could not possibly recommend to HMG that they should take on such a severe liability as the moth-eaten Pakistan was bound to be.

**21**. He ended up in a rather more reasonable frame of mind, regretting his inability to re-consider the Cabinet Mission plan. He said it could only have been worked in a spirit of the utmost co-operation and mutual trust which might have been possible a year ago; but that the atmosphere now so far from improving was continuously worsening, and it was clear that in no circumstances did Congress intend to work the plan either in accordance with the spirit or the letter.

**22**. It seems quite clear that if any attempt is made to impose the Cabinet Mission plan on the Muslim League, they will resort to arms to resist it.

*High Commissioner of the United Kingdom in India.

**23.** Having had nearly three weeks of incessant talks with all the leaders, I think I ought to let you know the lines on which my mind is working.

**24.** In the first place, I am convinced that we have got to make up our minds one way or the other in the very near future if we are to avert civil war and the risk of a complete breakdown of the administration. On this there is complete unanimity of opinion, both European and Indian, in this country. The Governors have not a shadow of doubt about it. My first conclusion, therefore, is that our decision must be announced before the end of May at the latest.

**25.** Secondly, I have very slender hopes of getting acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan, and I am very much afraid that partition may prove to be only possible alternative.

**26.** Thirdly, I feel strongly that the scheme of partition should be such as will not debar the two sides from getting together, even before we transfer power, if saner counsels prevail when the bewildering complications of partition are more clearly realised.

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**32.** I am glad to say that the Governors have expressed their unanimous support of the line I have taken with the various Indian leaders; and all of them urge the greatest possible speed in making a decision and an announcement; for even the quieter Provinces feel that we are sitting on the edge of a volcano and that an eruption might take place through any of the three main craters—Bengal, Punjab and NWFP—at any moment; with the risk of sporadic eruptions in Assam, Bombay and Bihar.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 4 April 24, 1947**

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**21**. This is the one bargaining counter I have left, for it is just possible that when faced with the full stupidity of what they are doing, the League might make some gesture to accept a compromise Cabinet Mission scheme and Congress in their desire to retain some form of unity might also be more forthcoming. But I am afraid this is a very pious hope and there are no signs that I shall succeed.

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**23** I have formed a special Committee consisting of Ismay, Mieville* and Abell, who are working on the production of a plan under my general direction. This would of course include the draft of an announcement by HMG on how they intend to transfer power on the due date. We four have met one of the principal leaders each day this week—Liaquat on Monday, Nehru Tuesday, Jinnah Wednesday and Patel on Friday. I have found that if one gets a single leader to give evidence before a small committee they are more reasonable and go out of their way to be helpful not only in pointing out difficulties which would be encountered from their own party, but also frequently drawing attention to the difficulties which would be raised by the other party.

*Sir Eric Mieville, Principal Secretary to the Viceroy (PSV).

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Eleventh Meeting April 8, 1947*

## ITEM 5. ALTERNATIVE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF INDIA

His Excellency the Viceroy said that all the various factors on which a decision on India's future would be based were fast becoming clarified. With each talk he had with the different Indian leaders new facets arose, new plans were suggested. Perhaps the outline plan put forward by Pandit Nehru was the best so far. Pandit Nehru had considered it probable that the 1935 Constitution (as at present modified by practice) would remain in force with the least possible number of changes until a new Constitution was devised.

Mr. Abell gave his view that this was bound to be the case — for the whole of India if unity was maintained or for Hindustan in the event of partition.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that Pandit Nehru had also expressed the opinion that the only way in which the Gandhi scheme could be made use of was by offering Mr Jinnah the leadership of the Interim Government. Pandit Nehru had emphasized that on no account should the strong central authority be dissolved until there were competent alternative authorities to which to hand over. In this opinion Pandit Nehru was in accordance with Rao Bahadur Menon.

Lord Ismay stressed the difficulty of committing to writing the various plans put forward by the Indian leaders. Nearly all their ideas were as yet inconclusive. His Excellency the Viceroy said that this was to be expected in the present stage, when they had not really got down to thinking out the details.

Mr. Abell doubted whether Mr. Jinnah would come into the Interim Government as Premier if Dominion status was granted. There would not, in such a case, be sufficient safeguards against domination by the Congress majority of the Government.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that Mr. Jinnah had told him the Cabinet Mission's plan now. He added that he intended to make it clear to Mr. Jinnah that, if he decided to give the Provinces the right to decide their own future, that right would also have to apply to areas within the Provinces.

Lord Ismay then raised the question of the line to be taken by the Viceroy if one or more of the parts of a divided India asked to be allowed to remain within the Empire. At present, it was possible for the Viceroy to fend off approaches on these lines—but Lord Ismay said that he could believe, when it came nearer to the point, that it would be right to continue to discourage all applicants. Although it might well come about that it would be the weaker party or parties who wanted to stay on in the Empire, Lord Ismay gave his opinion that it was improbable in the extreme that the division of India would lead to open warfare between Hindustan and Pakistan and thus the embroilment of British Forces. He emphasized the necessity for the retention of bases. A possible solution might be a form of Locarno pact,* whereby both sides would be guaranteed.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Second Meeting April 25, 1947*

## ITEM 7. PROPOSALS FOR A MEETING WITH INDIAN LEADERS (VCP 33)

His Excellency the Viceroy also asked Sir Eric Mieville to discuss the outlines of the plan contained in the draft announcement with Mr. Jinnah.

Discussion then turned to the time table which it was hoped

*Treaty concluded between Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the UK on November 16, 1925, by which Belgium, France and Germany undertook to maintain their frontiers as they then were and to abstain from the use of force against each other.

that events should take. In the course of this discussion, Mr. Scott suggested that a period of about a fortnight should be given to the Working Committees of the respective parties to consider the alternative plans in the light of full publicity and with the implications of each choice fully before them. He felt that, once the machinery of partiton was set in train, it would be very difficult to arrest and reverse it. If the Working Committees were given full time to discuss the alternatives, the Left and Right Wings of each party might come into opposition. There was already a strong element in each, he believed, in favour of accepting a compromise on the lines of the Cabinet Mission plan. Some Congress members were probably ready to make concession in order to obtain an unified India. On the other hand, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan were, he felt, beginning to realise the full implications of a truncated Pakistan.

Mr. Abell said that he considered that there would be plenty of opportunity after the issue of the announcement to obtain public opinion in the full limelight of publicity. He believed that, in any case, there would be a pause after the issue of the announcement. The parties would have any amount of time to join up again.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that it was most important that, with the issue of the announcement, the impression should not be created that partition was a foregone conclusion, but that the question had been referred for decision to the will of the people. The programme would really have to be decided on what the result of the expression of the people's will, through their representatives, were likely to be. He would like to see a decision reached as quickly as possible in order to stop recrimination and strife. He felt that there was bound to be a spate of venom during the period between the issue of the announcement and the time when the votes were cast. However, to improve the chances for returning to an united India, he felt that

an escape clause should be included in the announcement.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he would consider as a form of Union of India any plan in which the Centre dealt with the same subjects as in the Cabinet Mission's plan. The crux of the matter seemed to him to be that, in the Cabinet Mission's plan, the Hindu majority at the Centre would be able permanently to out-vote the Muslim minority and use the reserved subjects to subdue them. The alternative was that the representatives of Pakistan and Hindustan should come together to a common Centre on the basis of parity. If this form of an united India could be obtained, it might be possible for the Punjab, Bengal and Assam to remain united.

Mr. Abell pointed out that, if Pakistan and Hindustan were two Sovereign States, their representatives would not really meet on the basis of true parity. That would be dependent on the relative strength of the two. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he realised this point. His object was to create the effect of two Sovereign States, or separate blocs, negotiating at the Centre rather than having a system of majority voting.

His Excellency the Viceroy asked whether there was likely to be sufficient intelligent Muslim officials to administer Pakistan. Mr Abell said that they would probably hire Hindus for some of the more difficult administrative appointments.

Mr. Christie* said that, in his belief, Pakistan would be able to starve Hindustan within the course of a year or two. All the surplus food in India was in Pakistan and it could not be argued that they would not have to export this surplus for economic reasons because they would be able to grow jute and cotton instead for export.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he wished a brief to be prepared from which he would speak at the meeting with the Indian Leaders. Perhaps at this meeting he would spend the first

*W.H.J. Christie, Joint Personal Secretary to the Viceroy.

day in making every effort to secure acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan. The first day's meeting might perhaps be a short one, and the leaders might be asked to consult their Working Committees in the afternoon, and return with an answer the following day. If that answer was unfavourable, he might next bring forward the possibility of complete partition on the basis of the draft announcement before the meeting, making it clear that he would not be prepared to alter the details of this except by agreement with all parties. He might then revert to the possibility of some form of Centre. The meeting would have to be handled very carefully, step by step.

Mr. Scott said that he believed that the leaders of both the major parties in India were seriously worried. They did not know what was in the Viceroy's mind. He added that he did not consider that the present disturbances in India should be taken too much account of. He personally did not believe that there was likely to be civil war within a month although he agreed that the present state of affairs could not go on indefinitely. Lord Ismay pointed out that lawlessness was on the increase in a most frightening way.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 5 May 1, 1947**

During the past week I have still further restricted the number of interviews I have given, and have concentrated chiefly on meeting with Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh, After having obtained from them various suggestions to be embodied in the plan that we have been working on, I left my Staff to prepare a final draft of the plan whilst I carried out a two day tour to the NWFP and the Punjab.

**2.** Ismay (who like me, has been suffering from a "Delhi tummy") was unable to go round with the plan himself to

Jinnah and Nehru as I had arranged. Mieville went, and had a satisfactory interview with Nehru except on the subject of the NWFP; but he had an unsatisfactory one with Jinnah, who protested strongly against the partition of the Provinces, and demanded that I should immediately dissolve the Constituent Assembly. I attach a copy of the statement he has just issued to the press. Whether this unreasonable attitude is due to fear of his own followers or merely his maddening methods of bargaining remains to be seen. But I do not consider that he is in any position to stop the plan going forward though his open assent would make it much easier to implement it without trouble.

3. I am therefore sending Ismay off as arranged on Friday May 2 and he will be taking this Report with him. He will have the plan and will be available to explain it to the Cabinet. It is impossible to exaggerate the need for speed. My recent tour has more than confirmed all the reports I have had from outlying parts of India about the shocking deterioration that is taking place in so many Provinces.

4. The essence of the plan is to make it apparent to the people of India and to the world in general that we are allowing, so far as possible, Indians themselves to choose how they wish us to transfer power. Provinces will have the right to decide whether they will all work with the present Constituent Assembly; whether only some will adhere to it (Hindustan); and whether others will wish to set up a new Constituent Assembly (Pakistan). In the case of the three Provinces, Punjab, Bengal and Assam, in which partition has been asked for if Pakistan takes place, I am proposing machinery to allow the Provinces themselves to decide if they want partition. There is a reluctance to accept any formula, which I believe to be due to the desire of the Indians to force the British to make a decision on how they will

transfer power, so that we may get the blame if things ultimately go wrong.

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6. I very much hope that the Cabinet will be able to give me the necessary authority to go ahead and will be able to release Ismay after a week, for we all feel that every day now counts out here if we are to prevent the communal conflict from spreading to unmanageable proportions.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Seventh Meeting May 7, 1947*

ITEM 1. AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN

Sir Eric Mieville explained that, at a meeting of the staff that afternoon, Rao Bahadur Menon had put forward the view that it was possible that Mr. Jinnah would not accept the plan in the Draft Announcement. He had therefore suggested that it would be desirable to have another plan ready, so that Mr. Jinnah could be given a clear choice of alternatives.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had always borne the possibility of a rejection by Mr. Jinnah in mind. However Mr. Jinnah had given no indication of any such intention. At all the interviews which he had with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, he had watched them carefully for any sign that they intended to reject the plan. They had given no such sign. Every test which he had applied had led him to the belief that they intended to accept the plan. If Mr. Jinnah really intended to spring a last-moment surprise by rejecting it, he could not have played his part better towards making that surprise complete. Surely Mr. Jinnah's only reason for rejecting it, would be that he would hope, by continuing to bargain, to obtain more than the truncated Pakistan at present offered him. Mr. Jinnah's real aim was to keep

the British in India—and he might think that, if he rejected the plan, he would make it more difficult for the British to go, by continuing his efforts without end to obtain a more favourable award.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that the only other possible reason for a last-minute rejection by Mr. Jinnah would be a sudden realisation that Pakistan was not practicable. When faced with the full horrors of a truncated Pakistan, he might conceivably try to get out of it. But this was most unlikely. Mr. Suhrawardy had told him (His Excellency) that Mr Jinnah had said that he would agree to an independent Bengal so presumably the latter would be quite satisfied with the North-western Pakistan alone. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had asked Mr. K.S. Roy* for his comments on an independent Bengal and Mr. K.S. Roy had declared himself in favour of it so long as certain safeguards were guaranteed.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that, from information which he had received, he believed that the conditions for which Mr. K.S. Roy would ask would be impossible for Mr. Suhrawardy to accept. He went on to point out the ways in which Mr. Jinnah could boycott the present plan if he decided not to accept it. He would direct his followers not to attend the divided halves of the representatives to vote on the future of the Provinces and sit in the Constituent Assemblies. In Rao Bahadur Menon's opinion there was little doubt but that the Muslim League would obey their President's orders in this respect.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that it would always be open to him, in such circumstances, to go ahead with the plan and allow the Congress minority to supply the voters and form the Constituent Assemblies and Ministries in the Provinces or Half-Provinces in which the Muslim League boycotted the proceedings. Such a course would prove to Mr. Jinnah that

***Kiran Shankar Roy, Congress Leader of Bengal.**

two could play at his game. But it would lead to endless massacre and would be altogether out of accord with HMG's intention of handing over India in accordance with the will of the people. Therefore it would seem best to have ready an alternative plan which would involve the demission of power under the present Constitution. Such a plan would not, in the last resort, require the agreement of the Indian leaders. Provincial subjects would be demitted to existing Provincial Governments and Central subjects to the existing Central Government. His present intention was to confront Mr. Jinnah with his alternative the day before the proposed meeting with Indian leaders. He felt that such a clear choice would make Mr. Jinnah far more likely to accept the plan in the Draft Announcement.

Mr. Scott put forward the view that, if Mr. Jinnah even then refused to accept the plan in the Draft Announcement, his word should not be taken as final. The two alternatives should be put before the Muslim League Working Committee in the full glare of world publicity. He gave his opinion that demission of power under the existing Constitution would not wholly favour Congress. The Muslim League would presumably be in power in Bengal and the Punjab, and, because of the importance and bargaining power of these two Provinces, relations between them and the Congress centre would soon find their own level and the two parties would have to come together.

## ITEM 2. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, if the alternative plan to demit power under the existing Constitution finally came to be selected, it might be possible to put it into effect together with some form of Dominion status before June 1948. He felt that, in any case, it would be most highly desirable to give India Dominion status or its equivalent at least six months before

that date. Any such grant, however, would have to include provision that the British Army in India, so long as units remained, would be under the direct control of the Governor-General.

His Excellency the Viceroy emphasized that he felt that there would be world-wide criticism of the British if they withdrew from India completely before June 1948, and left the country, as was bound to happen in such circumstances, in a mess. During further discussion, Rao Bahadur Menon made the following points:

(*a*) Sir Chandulal Trivedi had had a talk with Sardar Patel on the subject of India remaining in the Commonwealth. It was his (Rao Bahadur Menon's) opinion that, if the Viceroy approached Sardar Patel on this subject, he would get a positive reply. Pandit Nehru would say the same.

(*b*) Sir Chandulal Trivedi had suggested that His Majesty should drop the word "Emperor" from his title of "King Emperor", and become simply "King of India." It was the associations with the term "Empire" to which so many Indians objected.

In this connection, His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that it was the substance of the future relationship, and not words, which mattered. He felt that any reference to "Empire" or "Dominion" would be unfortunate. Perhaps some such phrase as "A member of the British Commonwealth (or Association) of Free Nations" might be applied to India. Furthermore, any grant of Dominion status or its equivalent should not be described as such, but as the transfer of power.

(*c*) Congress's main objects in hoping for a continued link for a number of years would be largely in order to obtain assistance in the solution to tribal problems and in connection with relationship with the States. Congress's resolution calling for a sovereign independent republic could easily be ignored.

(*d*) In 1943-4 Indian opinion, with no clear goal before it, had

swung towards America. But this had been reversed as a result of a trade mission to America. As soon as Congress had come into power, the Cabinet had expressed their preferences for purchasing certain goods in the order—Great Britain, Canada, the USA and Switzerland.

(*e*) It would be constitutionally possible for a British Governor-General to have a dual responsibility towards two separate parts of India. He might also be an unifying link with the States.

(*f*) He did not believe that the difficulties of setting up the administrative machinery of Pakistan within 6 months were insuperable. There was already a Secretariat at Lahore, and the Government offices at Simla might also be handed over temporarily to Pakistan. Communications between Simla and Western Pakistan would, however have to go through Eastern Punjab.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 7 May 15, 1947**

. . . I asked Nehru to come as my guest, as I thought he was nearing a breakdown from overwork, and he spent four days with us. We have made real friends with him and whatever else happens I feel this friendship is sincere and will last.

**2.** I was greatly impressed at the speed with which Cabinet dealt with the plan which Ismay brought home, and felt every confidence in the way the matter was being handled in London. The new draft appeared to be better than ours, and when it arrived I held a Staff Meeting to discuss the final procedure. I had a distinct "hunch" that I ought to take advantage of my new-found friendship with Nehru to ask his personal opinion of the new draft. But at the Staff Meeting the general opinion was against this, since it would be departing from our agreed

procedure that all five leaders should see the final version together since they had all agreed with the provisional version in Delhi. However, experience in SEAC* has taught me that if I have a "hunch", it is best to follow it; so I took Nehru aside just before he was going to bed and gave him a copy to take up to read, on the understanding that he was going to advise me merely as a friend of the likely reception it would have on May 17.

3. The next day, when I was in the middle of a meeting with the Governor of the Punjab, Nehru sent me a letter, which came as a bombshell. I telegraphed this at once to London, and attach a copy of the letter to this Report for record purposes. The rest of that day was spent in trying to find out exactly what Nehru's objections were. Finally, it became distressingly clear that the mere fact that the plan had been redrafted in London had not only roused his own suspicions but would, in his opinion, make the plan less likely of acceptance at the Delhi meeting. This was my main reason for deciding to redraft the plan in Simla.

4. Since writing the above I have received the Prime Minister's telegram requesting me to come home for consultation and I shall spend the next few days endeavouring to secure the agreement of the Party leaders of the revised draft of the plan, and discussing certain aspects of Dominion status.

## ANNEX 1. LETTER FROM PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

*May 11, 1947*

You were good enough to speak to me frankly and in a very

*South-East Asian Command.

friendly manner last night and to give me an opportunity to see the tentative proposals. I need hardly tell you how much I appreciate your confidence in me or that I am convinced of your earnest desire to help India to achieve her freedom as early as possible. It has been a privilege to get to know you better and I hope that our understanding of each other will be helpful to both and to the wider causes we have at heart.

I read the draft proposals you gave me with the care they deserved and with every desire to absorb them and accept them in so far as I could. But with all the goodwill in the world I reacted to them very strongly. Indeed *they produced a devastating effect upon me*. The relatively simple proposals that we had previously discussed now appeared, in the garb that HMG had provided for them, in an entirely new context which gave them an *ominous* meaning. The whole approach was completely different from what ours had been and *the picture of India that emerged frightened me*. In fact much that we had done so far was undermined and the Cabinet Mission's scheme and subsequent developments were set aside, and an entirely new picture presented—*a picture of fragmentation and conflict and disorder, and unhappily also, of a worsening of relations between India and Britain.* That, I am wholly convinced, was not and is not your intention; nor can I believe that this is HMG's intention. But HMG seems to function in an ivory tower of their own isolated from realities in India. They proceed apparently on certain assumptions which have little relevance and ignore the basic factors of the situation in India.

If my reactions were so powerful, you can well imagine what my colleagues and others will think and feel. I think it will be a disaster if something is done now which will dam up the river of progressively friendly relations between Britain and India and reverse the current.

I have written rather hastily a note on the tentative proposals. This is necessarily rather crude as I am in a hurry to let you

know how I feel about it all. I tried to make the note brief but it lengthened itself. As soon as it is ready I shall send it to you. Meanwhile I am sending this letter to you for some indication of *how upset I have been by these proposals which, I am convinced, will be resented and bitterly disliked all over the country.*

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-First Meeting May 12, 1947*

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ITEM 2. PANDIT NEHRU'S PLAN

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had the previous evening further discussed with Pandit Nehru the plan which he had put forward for the early demission of power to the Interim Government on a Dominion status basis. This plan was really very similar to the alternative plan with which he had previously decided to threaten Mr. Jinnah if the latter did not accept Plan WE.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that it was apparent that control of the Army was going to be the most difficult issue in the transfer of power on a Dominion status basis. It was apparent that it was Congress's idea that they should have almost full control of the Army except on very limited subjects, for which the Joint Defence Council would be in control.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that Pandit Nehru had emphasized to him his belief that it would not be possible for either himself (His Excellency) or the British as a whole to devise an acceptable solution for India. Furthermore, if the British did give a decision and as it was regarded, bloodshed followed, not only would the British have to take the blame but also Indo-British relations would deteriorate. Pandit Nehru had expressed the view that the Indians should take the blame. Pandit Nehru had reiterated that he would be prepared to afford all manner of safeguards and assurances to the Muslim League if power

was handed over to the present Interim Government. He had also agreed that it would be possible to proceed with the proposal for a referendum in the NWFP and for Boundary Commissions.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he considered that this plan would be far more acceptable to Mr. Jinnah if all preparations including, for example, choice of capitals, were made before it was put up to him. Simla might be loaned to Pakistan as the seat of Government, as a temporary measure Lahore might become, with the existing machinery, the seat of the Western Punjab Provincial Government. Western Punjab might be amalgamated temporarily with the United Provinces. The Government of Western Bengal would presumably be at Calcutta. Dacca and Chittagong were possibilities for the capital of Eastern Bengal.

Sir Eric Mieville and Mr. Scott both stated that they did not think that there was any prospect of Mr. Jinnah preferring this plan to WE.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-Fourth Meeting May 31, 1947*

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ITEM 7. MR. JINNAH

His Excellency the Viceroy recalled that Sir Stafford Cripps had suggested, at a Cabinet Committee Meeting, that Mr. Jinnah might be threatened if he appeared likely to reject the plan, by a suggestion that the national partition would be drawn more in favour of the Sikhs. Lord Ismay gave his opinion that such a threat would be striking at the whole basis of the plan and that Mr. Jinnah would not be taken in by it.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that another possibility was to threaten Mr. Jinnah that the referendum in the NWFP would be run by the Provincial Government and not by the Governor-

General if there was strife there stirred up by the Muslim League. Lord Ismay agreed that it might be possible to threaten Mr. Jinnah with this; but Mr. Abell gave his opinion that it would not be right to threaten Mr. Jinnah at all.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he considered that he would be more likely to prevail upon Mr. Jinnah by a display of "hurt feelings" rather than by threats. With this view there was general agreement.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he also intended to pass on to Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Churchill's message that it was "a matter of life and death" for him to accept the plan. He would give Mr. Jinnah permission to inform his Working Committee of this message so long as it was not quoted in the newspapers.

His Excellency the Viceroy decided, in inducing Mr. Jinnah to accept the plan, not to use threats, but rather to point out what an embarrassment to him personally Mr. Jinnah's recent statement had been; and to pass on to Mr. Jinnah Mr. Churchill's message.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 8 June 5, 1947**

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**12.** On Monday (June 2) at 10 o'clock the first meeting of the Indian leaders took place in my study, with the following present:

Congress: Nehru, Patel, Kripalani.
League: Jinnah, Liaquat, Nishtar.*
Sikhs: Baldev.

The eight of us sat round a small table, while Ismay, Mieville and my Conference Secretary sat immediately behind me. The

*Abdur Rab Nishtar, Member for Communications in the Interim Government; later Minister for Communications in the Government of Pakistan.

atmosphere was tense and I got the feeling that the less the leaders talked the less the chance of friction and perhaps the ultimate breakdown of the meeting. After a tense beginning the atmosphere became generally friendly and distinctly hopeful; particularly when I reported on the most helpful attitude of HMG and the Opposition.

13. I asked the leaders to let me have their replies before midnight. Kripalani and Baldev promised me letters and Jinnah said he would come in person at 11 p.m. after they had seen their Working Committees. I kept back Jinnah after the meeting on Monday morning, both to counter-balance the fact that I was seeing Gandhi separately (he never comes with the Congress leaders), and to impress on him that there could not be any question of a "No" from the League.

14. Since Gandhi returned to Delhi on May 24, he has been carrying out an intense propaganda against the new plan, and although I have always been led to understand he was the man who got Congress to turn down the Cabinet Mission plan a year ago he was now busy trying to force the Cabinet Mission plan on the country. He may be a saint but he seems also to be a disciple of Trotsky. I gather that the meetings of the Congress Working Committee have been most acrimonious in consequence, and I believe the leaders were quite apprehensive of my seeing Gandhi on Monday. I certainly was. Judge then of my astonished delight on finding him enter the room with his finger to his lips to indicate that it was his day of silence!

15. I spent 45 minutes explaining to him why the Cabinet Mission plan could not be enforced against the will of any community, and generally trying to break down his resistance to the new plan. He scribbled me a few notes on the back of used envelopes, of a friendly nature, but once more called on

me to remove Caroe* from the NWFP, a request which has now been renewed by both Nehru and Khan Sahib (the Premier of the NWFP).

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17. I had invited the Commanders-in-Chief and Army Commanders to come to this party and gave them dinner after it. I then had a meeting with them, gave them the plan, and discussed the steps which would be needed to ensure the maintenance of law and order in the interim period and also how to carry out partition of the armed forces without loss of morale. I need hardly say that the plan proved a great surprise to everybody (except of course to Auchinleck)† and was enthusiastically received as the only possible solution to the problem.

18. At 11 o'clock that night Jinnah came round. He spent half an hour conveying the protest of his Working Committee against the partition of the Provinces and saying that if His Majesty's Government were really going to insist on this scandalous move, then his Working Committee hoped most strongly that they would at least do justice to the Scheduled Castes in Bengal by insisting on a proper referendum. I reminded him that I had explained at great length at the meeting that morning the Governor's reasons against a referendum and that I did not in any case intend to accept any amendment of the printed plan unless it was agreed to by all parties.

19. I then asked him straight out whether his Working Committee were going to accept the plan. He replied that they were

*Sir Olaf Caroe, Governor of North West Frontier Province.

†Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief in India until August 15, 1947; Supreme Commander administering the partition of the Indian army until November 30, 1947.

"hopeful". I then asked him whether he intended to accept it himself, to which he replied that he would support me personally and undertook to use his very best endeavours to get the All-India Muslim League Council to accept it. He had called an urgent meeting next Monday for this purpose. I finally asked him whether he felt I would be justified in advising the Prime Minister to go ahead and make the announcement, to which he replied very firmly, "Yes." Ismay, who was present, and I both felt that this was as much of an acceptance as we should ever get out of him until his Council met.

**20.** Shortly after Jinnah left, the letter came on behalf of the Congress Working Committee from Kripalani. It was quite a long letter, a copy of which has been sent home. Although it contained various objections and reservations it was a firm acceptance on behalf of the whole Congress Working Committee; subject of course to general ratifications by the All-India Congress Committee in about a fortnight's time.

**21.** Baldev Singh's letter was only received on Tuesday morning and also contained reservations about instructions to the Boundary Commission on behalf of the Sikhs, though it accepted the plan in other respects.

**22.** I called an early morning meeting of my Staff to discuss the two main objections raised by Congress, and I despatched V.P. Menon to see Patel, and invited Nehru to come at 9.30 a.m. to see me before the meeting.

**23.** The line I took about these two points with Nehru was as follows:

(*a*) The Congress request to allow the NWFP referendum to include a third choice—for independence—could not be accepted unless the Muslim League leaders agreed to it,

which Nehru admitted was out of the question. I further pointed out that it was at Nehru's own request that I had removed the choice of independence in the case of Bengal and other Provinces to avoid "Balkanisation". I expressed surprise that he should have been a party to such a manoeuvre, the more so since he admitted that this Province could not stand on its own, and would eventually have to join up with one side or the other in any case.

(*b*) The last sentence of the new paragraph 20 produced a strong reaction. This reads as follows:

"This will be without prejudice to the right of the Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth."

It may be remembered that this was the sentence which I thought in London might give trouble and which I had favoured omitting. Nehru began by saying he did not doubt my sincerity or that of HMG, but that this sentence drew attention to the fact that Pakistan would be allowed to remain within the Commonwealth even if Hindustan wished to withrdraw. I pointed out that what the sentence really drew attention to was the fact that either side could withdraw whenever they liked. Nehru replied, "But everybody knows that; why did you have to draw public attention to the fact that one side could stay in if the other side withdraws?" I replied that this was done from motives of honesty. He argued that HMG could not be a party to allowing Pakistan to remain in the Empire if Hindustan wished eventually to withdraw. I pointed out that HMG did not run the Commonwealth; that all the States in it were free and equal partners; and that the only method open to him for getting Pakistan out would be either by persuading them to withdraw at the same time as Hindustan, or raising the matter at a Commonwealth conference and getting the other Dominions to agree to this course. Finally I told him that I had no

intention of raising such a controversial matter which would only infuriate Mr. Jinnah. We then went into the meeting.

24. Once more at this second meeting I was afraid to let the leaders speak and so I spoke for each of them in turn, pointing out that as we had all expected, all three parties had grave objections to the various points in the plan, and that I was gratified to find that they had aired them to me. Since, however, I knew enough of the situation to realise that not one of the suggestions would be accepted by either of the other parties I did not propose to raise them at this meeting and asked all the leaders to signify their consent, which they did.

25. The very moment I felt that I had got enough agreement on which to go ahead I announced this decision and then threw on the table copies of a lengthy paper prepared by my staff entitled "The Administrative Consequences of Partition." The severe shock that this gave to everyone present would have been amusing if it was not rather tragic. I arranged to call another meeting on Thursday to consider it, and then broke up the meeting as quickly as I could.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-Eighth Meeting June 4, 1947*

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ITEM 14. THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF PARTITION

Copies were handed round of a letter which had been received from Pandit Nehru that morning concerning the previous day's discussion in a meeting with the seven Indian leaders, of the paper entitled "The Administrative Consequences of Partition." In this letter Pandit Nehru also reiterated his view that he did not like the idea of the Interim Government carrying on in the

present manner for another two months.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had arranged for Rao Bahadur Menon to discuss this matter with Pandit Nehru. He noted that in his letter the latter suggested that he (the Viceroy) should discuss it with Mr. Krishna Menon.* He pointed out that Pandit Nehru was continually asking him to see Krishna Menon. Whatever the merits of using the latter as a "contact man" might be, it was clear that Mr. Krishna Menon was Pandit Nehru's right-hand man.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 8 June 5, 1947**

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31. This morning, June 5 I held my third meetings with the leaders to discuss the paper on the administrative consequences of partition. We made very slow progress as each side appeared to be anxious to make political speeches. Jinnah was at pains to explain that both States would be independent and equal in every way. Nehru pointed out that the whole basis of approach must be different; India was continuing in every way the same, and the fact that dissident Provinces were to be allowed to secede must not interrupt the work of the Government of India or its foreign policy. Feeling was very tense.

32. Both sides were still very anxious to obtain my services as arbitrator in all matters of dispute in working out the partition. But I pointed out that since both sides were already approaching the problem from such widely divergent points of view it was clear that I should have to give a decision which one side or the other side would dislike practically every day, and however much they now professed to believe, to undermine their confi-

*Close confidante of Nehru who became the High Commissioner of India in the U.K. from August 1947, and later the Defence Minister of India.

dence in me within a very short time. I therefore felt I should not be of much use to them in this capacity and I am glad to say they agreed to try and find a mutually acceptable High Court Judge to fulfil this role.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 9 June 12, 1947**

I have spent most of the past week in consultation with the Indian leaders about the administrative consequences of partition. Meanwhile press reaction in this country to HMG's announcement of June 3 continue to be favourable and that absence of any serious outbreaks in the country is most satisfactory.

2. I received information towards the end of last week that Gandhi was in a very unhappy and emotional mood and some of the Congress leaders feared he might denounce the plan and its acceptance at his next prayer meeting. I therefore asked him to come and see me before this prayer meeting; he was indeed in a very upset mood and began by affirming how unhappy he was at my spoiling his life's work.

5. I asked V.P. Menon who had been invited to see Gandhi to work on similar lines and he reported that my talk had been remarkably successful, since Gandhi now felt that I had honestly tried to follow his advice, and that he had thus taken a far greater part in shaping the future of India than had at first sight appeared from the way the plan was worked.

6. Generally speaking HMG's statement has eased the tension throughout the country and the real fear of communal war on a large scale has disappeared. The situation in the Gurgaon area is however still unsatisfactory; nor did any of us expect

the announcement of June 3 to have any appreciable effect on this particular situation. It is clear that there are still not enough troops in the area to control the situation and the District Commissioner has asked for more. The Commander-in-Chief has agreed to a further increase bringing the force up to one brigade. Lahore and Amritsar also remain rather unsettled, although the disturbances are on a much smaller scale than before the announcement. Calcutta is, I am glad to say, remarkably quiet. I refer to Burrows' report on Bengal later on.

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8. The All-India Muslim League Council held a meeting in camera on Monday June 9. I thought it very wise of them to hold it in camera, but this did not prevent Vallabhbhai Patel from sending me the transcript of shorthand notes on the proceedings, presumably taken by a Congress spy! I attach a copy of the resolution, which was passed. I had asked Jinnah to show me the draft resolution before it was put to the meeting, but he said that the resolution would be formulated as a result of the meeting and he did not know what it would be.

9. Although I did not expect the resolution to be very differently worded, it caused a howl of indignation among the Congress Press, and violent letters of protest from Nehru and Patel, who expressed fears that they would not be able to manage the All India Congress Committee in view of the failure of the League to make a definite announcement that they accepted the plan as a settlement.

10. After a meeting this morning of the Committee of the Cabinet which I have set up to make the necessary administrative preparations for the Partition Council, I kept back Liaquat Ali Khan and Patel to thrash this matter out. Patel said quite categorically that unless Mr. Jinnah would give a firm accep-

tance in writing before the All India Congress Committee met, he could not guarantee what would occur at that meeting, since their draft resolution was an acceptance of the plan "in view of the acceptance of the plan by the Muslim League Council". Liaquat countered by pointing out that when the League accepted the Cabinet Mission plan, Congress had defeated them by putting such reservations on their acceptance that the League had had to pull out, and they did not intend to be outmanoeuvred again in this way.

**11.** I finally suggested as a compromise that Jinnah should write me a letter saying that he was authorised by the All India Muslim League Council to accept the plan as a compromise settlement subject to the All India Congress Committee accepting it in a similar spirit. Liaquat Ali Khan went off to try and persuade Jinnah to sign such a letter, but was not very hopeful since he said Mr. Jinnah did not like signing letters of this sort. I told him that if Mr. Jinnah refused to sign he was to send him to see me. Jinnah came at 6 o'clock tonight and categorically refused to sign until after Congress. Once more I had to take the onus upon myself and so I wrote a letter to the President of the Congress which I hope will do the trick.

**12.** I had a very difficult Cabinet meeting last week, in fact I have never attended a worse meeting at any time anywhere. The trouble arose over my proposal that there should be a sort of moratorium on high grade appointments and policy decisions until the two Governments had been sorted out. I suggested that any urgent appointments or action should be submitted to the Cabinet as a whole. (The Muslim League have been making some bad appointments in their departments the major part of which will be inherited soon by Congress, and the latter are naturally sore about this.) Both sides accepted my suggestion

with every sign of pleasure, with the proviso from the Muslim Leaguers that matters thus placed before the Cabinet would not be decided by majority vote since that would put Congress in control over the appointments and high level policy of every department. I suggested that the way out of this difficulty would be for both parties to authorise me to decide an appointment to one or other of the two new Governments and, if so, to rule that the matter should not be decided by majority vote. This was accepted by both sides.

**13.** Nehru then announced that he had a number of diplomatic appointments which were awaiting confirmation and that whereas he did not mind placing them before the Cabinet, he trusted I would rule that they did not concern Pakistan. Liaquat objected and hinted that Pakistan would not wish to have an Ambassador appointed to Russia. As Nehru's own sister, Mrs. Pandit, has been proposed for this appointment, this remark was particularly tactless, though Liaquat afterwards assured me that he had no idea that Mrs. Pandit had been nominated. Anyway, there was a tremendous scene when Nehru announced that he would not tolerate interference by the League in the affairs of the Government, and that he would insist on matters like this being put to the majority vote and would see that the League was outvoted every time. When Liaquat replied equally violently, Nehru then said that if the Government were to be turned over to the League he himself would forthwith resign from the Government. Pandemonium then broke loose and everyone talked at once.

**14.** I had to call the principal offenders to order by name, and I then said, "Gentlemen, what hopes have we of getting a peaceable partition if the very first discussion leads to such a disgraceful scene as this? This matter will be deferred for the present, and when it is brought up I will give a ruling. In the

meanwhile I want to know that you back me in this matter." I then looked round at each of them. I was still faced with two or three sulky faces, and I then said, "I am not going on with the next item until I see a row of smiling faces in front of me." This had the desired effect: everybody laughed and the tension was broken. I have only reported this incident at such length to show the electric atmosphere in which we are still working and the appalling difficulty with which all of us are going to be faced during the 64 days remaining until partition is achieved on August 15. The very speed at which we will all have to work will, however, be our best safeguard against such trouble.

**15.** I might add that the Cabinet started this meeting under obviously strained feelings, since those Members who had not been in on my discussions with the leaders over the administrative consequences of partition had apparently resented being left out of it. I took the responsibility on myself for doing this, and explained that though they might be the legal Government of India today, they had to face the fact that within the next two or three weeks we should probably find on the vote of the Provinces that partition was certain. I therefore had to deal over questions affecting partition so far as possible with the leaders who were likely to be responsible for selecting the two new separate Governments. This explanation, I am glad to say, was well received; but they did insist that the committees and machinery for doing the partition should be set up by a Committee of the present Cabinet until partition was legally certain, and this was agreed to.

**16.** I had an equally difficult meeting with the leaders the next day. Jinnah said that he could not agree that this matter had been handled correctly in the Executive Council (as he insisted on referring to the Cabinet). His point was that the authority really responsible for making all the arrangements was HMG or

the Governor-General in his discretion, and not the Interim Governments. This, of course led to an acrimonious discussion between Jinnah and Nehru. I eventually got Jinnah to agree to the proposal I had put to the Cabinet that a Committee should be set up consisting of two representatives of Congress and two representatives of the Muslim League, all of whom should be members of the Interim Government, but that it should not be referred to as a Cabinet Committee. I also offered to act as Chairman, and with this course of action there was general agreement.

**17.** The representatives of this Committee have been selected by the leaders as Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad for the Congress, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Nishtar for the League. The duty of this Committee will be to make an examination of the steps to be taken to set up the machinery, including the formation of sub-committees, for carrying our partition, and that this should be a fact-finding body, whose duty it would be to make proposals and not to reach final decisions.

**18.** The first meeting of this Committee took place this morning, when it was agreed that a Steering Committee should be set up consisting of the Cabinet Secretary (H.M. Patel) and the Financial Adviser in the Military Finance Department (Mohamed Ali), probably the two most experienced and able Indian officials in the country. This Steering Committee and the expert sub-committees will consist of officials only, and both Patel and Mohamed Ali are optimistic that the principles of partition and a great deal of the actual separation can be effected before August 15.

**19.** It was also decided that as soon as a decision on partition is known (i.e. immediately any one Province has declared in favour of joining a new and separate Constituent Assembly), a

Partition Council should be set up to take over from this Committee; that it shall consist of two of the top ranking leaders of Congress and two of the Muslim League, whether they are in the Interim Government or not; and that I shall be Chairman with no arbitral functions.

## B. INDIA AND THE COMMONWEALTH

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twentieth Meeting April 22, 1947*

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### ITEM 2. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that representatives of approximately half the inhabitants of India had already asked to be allowed to remain within the British Commonwealth. These included the Muslim League, the Scheduled Castes and the States—although all the States' subjects might not be of the same opinion as their rulers. All these applicants seemed to think that they were doing Great Britain a favour by asking to stay in. His Excellency the Viceroy asked whether it was considered that there was any possibility of granting some form of Dominion status to India as a whole or, more probably to the separate parts of India in the near future. In such an arrangement the Governor-General might perhaps be chairman with a casting vote, preferably voluntarily accorded, in a Defence Council containing also one representative of both Hindus and Pakistan. British troops would probably have to be retained under the personal orders of the Governor-General.

Mr. Abell said that the main difficulty in such a suggestion was that it was likely to take at least a year to set up a Pakistan Government.

Lord Ismay said that he did not think that it should be categorically stated that HMG would not accept a unilateral application on the part of Pakistan to remain within the Commonwealth. If forced into a position whereby only one part of India wanted to remain in the Commonwealth, he felt that HMG might consider accepting such an application. In his opinion that would be more likely to prevent a war than not to allow either side to remain in.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he was considering informing Pandit Nehru, possibly through Krishna Menon, that both Pakistan and the States had expressed a desire to remain within the Commonwealth; that he could not suppress such requests; and that he was of the belief that popular sentiment within the rest of the British Commonwealth would not allow them to go unanswered. His Excellency the Viceroy went on to say that planning for the grant before June 1948—possibly by January 1948—of Dominion status to India, whether united or divided, should continue concurrently with the plans now being prepared in connection with the main decision.

Lord Ismay said that he felt it possible that Hindustan and Pakistan, would ask for a British Governor-General to stay on after June 1948 in any event.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that the incumbent of such a post would have a most difficult task as he would be the apparent focus of authority without possessing any factual power. On the credit side, however, it would be a great advantage before the eyes of the world to receive such a request from all the Indian parties.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Second Meeting April 25, 1947*

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## ITEM 5. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

His Excellency the Viceroy recalled that he had always made it absolutely clear in his discussions with Indian leaders that there would be no question of the British remaining in India after June 1948, unless they were specifically asked to do so by an united request from all Indian parties. If such a request was made, he would forward it for the consideration of HMG. He said that he was personally of the opinion that such a request should be refused if it is possible to refuse it with honour. He felt that, whereas all possible assistance must obviously be given to India on request, and if she remained within the Commonwealth, by the provision of officers to assist her armed forces, the task facing a British Governor-General, as a high level umpire, with a small team of advisers, would be fraught with frightful difficulties. He said that he wanted Lord Ismay to discuss this question when he went to London and to point out that there was hardly one responsible person of every Indian Party who had not thrown out some hints that they wanted the British to stay after 1948. He felt that there was a distinct possibility that, if an united request was made, HMG might decide to accede to it and leave a British Governor-General (possibly himself) in India after June 1948. He also felt that there was a possibility that HMG might accept an unilateral application by Pakistan to remain within the Commonwealth. Lord Ismay should warn the Secretary of State that there was a move afoot towards such a request being made and point out the difficulties which would result.

Lord Ismay said that he considered that the greatest care

should be exercised over this question in conversations in India also. The Indian leaders were very suspicious and any verbal statements made might easily be misunderstood.

Sir Eric Mieville said that he believed that any move to grant India Dominion status before June 1948 would be interpreted by the Indians as an effort to keep them in the Commonwealth after that date.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Fourth Meeting May 1, 1947*

## ITEM 1. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

The paper before the meeting contained an extract from a letter from the Secretary of State for India concerning the possibility, which had been mentioned, of States or groups of States being granted Dominion status. It was pointed out that the States were not a present British territory at all and could hardly be incorporated as part of the British Empire.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that this conclusion did not in any way apply to such separate parts as might be created of British India itself. The question still remained as to what line was to be taken with any such parts as might apply independently to remain within the Commonwealth. The more he thought of it, the more convinced did he become that it would be disastrous to allow only, for example, Pakistan to remain in, and thus back up one part of India against the other, which might involve the United Kingdom in war. He would not personally recommend that such an application should be granted, though his recommendation would doubtless not count for much in a matter of such worldwide importance. On the other hand, he personally was much in favour of British India as a whole being permitted to remain in the Commonwealth,

and was using the Pakistan threat to remain in as a lever to help Congress to "take the plunge". He was opposed to a system of alliance as it would not enable the British to help India in the way they best could—by their presence. In the meanwhile, a completely non-committed attitude on the question should be maintained.

Lord Ismay said that he entirely agreed that no indication should be given of views held or decisions likely to be reached on this matter. He gave his personal opinion that, when and if the time came it would be nigh impossible both on moral, and, he believed, on material grounds, to eject from the Commonwealth any part of India, for example Pakistan, which asked to remain in. Relations with the whole Mussulman bloc, extending from the Middle East had to be considered. He personally felt that the one way to avoid a civil war would be Britsh backing, if not of the whole, of one part of India. Air power alone would ensure this. There was, also, no doubt that British strategy required harbours and naval bases in India if possible.

Mr. Scott gave his opinion in support of Lord Ismay, so far as moral and material ties and the prevention of civil war in India were concerned.

Mr. Abell said that he agreed with His Excellency's views at present. He agreed that the British would have a continuing moral responsibility, but felt that the worst way of fulfilling this might be the unilateral support of Pakistan.

Mr. Campbell-Johnson held similar views. He felt that support by Great Britain of one part of India only would result in India becoming a centre of international intrigue.

Sir Eric Mieville said that Sir Walter Monckton*had been invited by Pandit Nehru to dine with him on May 3 to discuss "some form of continued allegiance to the Crown", also stated

*Eminent jurist who became the Constitutional Adviser to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

that Rao Bahadur Menon had informed him that Sardar Patel might well accept an offer of Dominion status for the time being. He also raised the question whether according to the Statute of Westminster, all members of British Commonwealth would have to be consulted on the issue of parts or the whole of India remaining in or being ejected.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Fifth Meeting May 3, 1947*

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ITEM 6. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

After discussion on what line should be taken by His Excellency the Viceroy and the senior members of his Staff in discussing the retention of India within the Commonwealth, His Excellency the Viceroy laid down the following principles:

(*a*) The matter should not be raised in conversation with Indian leaders unless they raised it themselves.

(*b*) The Constituent Assembly had passed a resolution in favour of a sovereign independent republic but, since only Congress were represented in the Constituent Assembly, this did not apply to the rest of British India. Therefore the question of it leaving the Commonwealth had not yet arisen.

(*c*) The Viceroy had received no instructions as to the line that he should take in the event of one or more parts of India expressing a desire to remain within the Commonwealth; but he had been enjoined not to enter into any discussions which might imperil the chances of Indian unity, to attain which had always been and would remain his first ambition and determination. In any case, the question was one of the highest policy and could only be settled by HMG in the light of the situation created by their decision on the ques-

tion of the demission of power.

(*d*) If not only Pakistan but some of the larger States (for example Hyderabad, Kashmir and Mysore) asked in a public appeal not to be thrown out of the Commonwealth, it would be difficult to imagine the members of the Commonwealth agreeing to throw them out.

(*e*) The Viceroy's personal opinion was that the retention of parts of India only in the Commonwealth would be undesirable; but clearly he could not stand in the way of requests to this effect being transmitted to HMG.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that the last thing which he wanted to see, and it would indeed be most disastrous, would be that Pakistan left the Empire irretrievable and Pakistan remained within irretrievably. The solution which must be suggested every time in the most skilful way was that the decision on this matter was in the hands of the Indians themselves.

Lord Ismay asked whether His Excellency thought that the Chiefs of Staff should be requested to examine the possible retention of parts only of India in the Commonwealth from a purely military point of view. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he considered that it would be most desirable for the Chiefs of Staff to make such an examination in the strictest secrecy. He pointed out that Field Marshall Auchinleck as well as Lord Ismay would be available in London to attend a Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting if required.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he considered it most important that no Ministers of HMG should, at the present time, commit themselves in any way on the question of the retention of parts of India in the Commonwealth and indeed on the whole trend of present events and plan.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Ninth Meeting May 9, 1947*

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## ITEM 5. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

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(*d*) The advantages likely to accrue to the United Kingdom from the retention of India within the Commonwealth.

Sir Eric Mieville gave his view that the advantages which India would gain from staying in the Commonwealth were obvious enough; the advantages which would accrue to the United Kingdom were not so obvious. It was possible that India would only remain in for a period of, say, three years, until the new Constitution was framed; then there might be general elections and a Socialist or Communist Government might come into power in India and go out of the Commonwealth. The telegram which had been despatched the previous day referred to "a sporting chance" of the Union of India remaining indefinitely in the Commonwealth but would HMG be prepared to take "a sporting chance".

His Excellency the Viceroy said that in his opinion the solid advantages which the United Kingdom would gain were as follows:

(i) An early transfer of power would gain her tremendous credit.

(ii) Such a transfer would involve the termination of the present responsibilities.

(iii) A request by India to remain in the Commonwealth would enhance British prestige enormously in the eyes of the world. This factor alone was of overriding importance.

(iv) Such a request would be of the greatest advantage to the prestige of the present British Government in the eyes of

the country.

(v) From the point of view of Empire defence an India within the Commonwealth filled in the whole framework of world strategy; a neutral India would leave a gap which would complicate the problem enormously; an hostile India would mean that Australia and New Zealand were virtually cut off.

His Excellency the Viceroy also gave his view that, even after three years, the Indian armed forces would not be fully nationalized and would still require British officers.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirtieth Meeting May 10, 1947*

## ITEM 1. THE RETENTION OF INDIA WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had had a talk in the morning with Mr. Krishna Menon on this subject. Mr. Krishna Menon has pointed out that it was he who had first suggested the early transfer of power to India on a Dominion status basis. Mr. Krishna Menon had also stated that one of the advantages in such a plan which most attracted Pandit Nehru was the latter's belief that he (His Excellency) would be able greatly to influence the States. Mr. Krishna Menon had said that the main difficulty was that, even if Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel agreed to the scheme, the rest of the Congress Party would have to be persuaded accordingly. Congress Party always watched carefully a possible split of leaders having sold themselves to Great Britain, those leaders would be finished.

Rao Bahadur Menon pointed out that the main argument which the Indian leaders would be able to put forward to their Left Wing was that Dominion status was only an interim arrangement. He went on to say that Sardar Patel had already put out a statement requesting an early grant of Dominion

status. He had talked on the telephone the previous evening to Sardar Patel, who had put forward the theory that Pandit Nehru was finding great difficulty in admitting to His Excellency that he wanted Dominion status because it would take a long time to produce a Constitution. Sardar Patel thought, in fact, that Pandit Nehru was "covering up".

## C. THE DIVISION OF THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fourth Meeting March 28, 1947*

### ITEM 7. THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had given a dinner party the previous evening to the Commander-in-Chief in India and the Army Commanders. Field Marshal Auchinleck had expressed the view that it would take from five to ten years satisfactorily to divide the Indian Army. The Muslim League's declared policy was that they did not want an unified Army. But surely the result of splitting the Army communally would be that the non-Muslim parties would be much the stronger. They would be able to take over General Headquarters, the main supply dumps and a large majority of the officers. The Muslims would be left with a greatly inferior share. He intended to point this out to Mr. Jinnah.

Lord Ismay added the point that there was not, in the Indian Army, a single wholly Muslim unit, whereas there were numbers of units which consisted wholly of personnel of other communities.

His Excellency the Viceroy emphasized that whoever controlled an unified Army, or the most efficient divided Army, controlled India. The armed forces—for the Indian Navy and Air

Force were to be reckoned with also—were the biggest bargaining point there was. It seemed to him that one possible weakness of the Cabinet Mission's plan was that, if the Army was used to quell riots and disturbances the Central Government would have a stranglehold over the minority party. Some solution must be found to ensure that this did not happen. Perhaps the Army might be used internally only on the majority vote of both major parties. The Central Government would be able to wield great influence by the positioning of troops, although locally troops would be under the orders of provincial governments. There might be a pre-agreed positioning of forces, or some such safeguard.

Lord Ismay pointed out that fundamentally no safeguards were of value if the two parties were not going to co-operate. If they did co-operate, the rules and safeguards did not matter. His Excellency the Viceroy said that, although this was to a large extent true, he still wanted a study of possible safeguards to be made so that he would be able to put them forward to Mr. Jinnah.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Eleventh Meeting April 8, 1947*

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ITEM 2. THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Abell laid before the Viceroy a letter received that day from Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan concerning the alleged inadequate representation of Muslims in the Indian armed forces. In this letter Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan also asked that the armed forces should forthwith be reorganised in such a manner that they could readily be split up between Pakistan and Hindustan at the proper time. He added the suggestion that in the implementation of this proposal the Commander-in-Chief should be directly responsible

to the Viceroy and not to the Defence Member.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that this letter was apparently the direct result of his conversation with Mr. Jinnah the previous day, when he, in his endeavour to maintain an open mind and hear all points of view before giving an opinion, had not expressed disagreement with Mr. Jinnah's arguments for Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah had evidently taken this absence of disagreement to imply a measure of agreement.

Lord Ismay pointed out that to take any action on Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's request would be to prejudge the political issue. Until and unless the Viceroy had reported to HMG that it would not be possible to hand over to an united India and to put the Cabinet Mission's plan into effect, that plan "held the field"—and that plan contemplated one national Army. When and if the decision to create Pakistan was made, then and not till then a decision on the splitting of the armed forces would have to be made. But the implementation of that decision would surely have to be a matter for the Indians themselves. As he saw it, representatives of the future Pakistan and representatives of Hindustan would then meet together in Committee, under the chairmanship, as referee, of the Viceroy or an officer nominated by him, and decide how the Army was to be divided. Apart, however, from this question of dividing the Army, there arose also from Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's letter a short-term problem of the proportion of Hindus and Muslims in the officer cadres of the armed forces at the present.

Mr. Abell said that on several occasions the Muslim Members had raised in the Cabinet this question of proportion. He had never yet heard a satisfactory answer given. Sardar Baldev Singh and the Commander-in-Chief both favoured the system of promotion by merit. This was bound to tell in the favour of the Hindus because the great majority of the most competent and intelligent officers were Hindus. Mr. Abell said that he considered it probable that the system of promotion by merit

inter-communal proportion would be better safeguarded.

Sir Eric Mieville pointed out that not only had the Hindus the best officers; but also Hindustan, if India were divided would have the enormous majority (and, in the case of a truncated Pakistan, almost a monopoly) of the depots, dumps and arms factories at present in existence.

His Excellency the Viceroy said, even if it were decided that there would eventually be partition in some shape or form, there could be no division of the Indian armed forces before the withdrawal of the British. This was for two reasons—first because it would not be physically possible to carry out such a division in the time available; until then he would not—in fact HMG had laid down that he should not—agree to any division in the armed forces which would compromise this responsibility. He might, however, be prepared to sanction the establishment of a Committee to plan the division and to devise safeguards so that the armed forces could not be used by one party against the other after the British withdrawal. Field Marshal Auchinleck or Lord Ismay might perhaps be appointed chairman of such a committee—but only on the request of the Indians themselves. It would, however, be preferable not to have a British chairman; after all, the Hindus as well as the Muslims had every reason to negotiate as the alternative might well be a sudden mass Muslim desertion from the armed forces, resulting in chaos.

His Excellency the Viceroy stressed the necessity for maintaining complete impartiality in this matter but at the same time avoiding any conciliatory steps which might result in the maintenance of law and order being compromised. For so long as he remained responsible, an efficient Army was essential. He was quite prepared on receipt of a formal request from the Muslim League members to endeavour to get the Cabinet to agree to a system of fairer intercommunal proportion among officers, and that an organisation should be set up to prevent absolute Congress control of the armed forces.

His Excellency the Viceroy went on to say that, supposing it was decided to demit to individual Provinces, which would then be free to decide whether to join groups or remain by themselves, it would still be most necessary, if at all possible, to retain some central organisation to control defence problems. What then were the advantages of having two absolutely separate defence organisations?

Sir Eric Mieville recalled that Brigadier Cariappa had estimated that it would take between five and ten years to make the nationalized Indian Army fully competent. How much longer, then would this period be if the Army were divided?

Lord Ismay thought that the Muslims, if granted Pakistan, might well prefer to have a small and bad Army of their own to a minor share in a large and good one. However, this was again pre-judging the issue. The time to work the matter out would be after the decision to grant Pakistan (if that were decided)—and the men to work out the details should be Indian, not British. An allied problem which would have to be solved at the same time was the future of the States' forces – whether they would remain independent or join Hindustan or Pakistan respectively.

His Excellency the Viceroy invited PSV to draft, for his approval, a reply to Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's letter.

## SECTION II: THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

### A. A CIVIL WAR IN THE MAKING

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 1 April 2, 1947**

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I should like to be able to paint an encouraging picture of my first impressions, but fear it would be misleading if I did so. The scene here is one of unrelieved gloom, and even that inveterate optimist Field Marshal Auchinleck has given up hope of any reasonable settlement, but begged me not to be infected by his gloom. At this early stage I can see little common ground on which to build any agreed solution for the future of India. The Cabinet is fiercely divided on communal lines; each party has its own solution and does not at present show any sign of being prepared to consider any other.

In addition, the whole country is in a most unsettled state. There are communal riots and troubles in the Punjab, NWFP, Bihar, Calcutta, Bombay, UP, and even here in Delhi. In the Punjab all parties are seriously preparing for civil war, and of these by far the most business-like and serious are the Sikhs, who already have a plan to seize the main irrigation centres in order to exercise physical control over the whole of the Punjab. Although I am anxious to visit the Punjab and NWFP as soon

as possible, there is too much to be done in Delhi to allow me to get away, and I have therefore sent Ismay off to visit Jenkins* and Caroe.

In Bengal the Governor has been unable to persuade his Ministry to take action regarding the demonstrations by Muslim immigrants on the Assam border, and it looks as if further disorders may result. There has been a considerable amount of trouble with the Police in Bihar, but the situation is now reported to be under control. The strikers returned to duty and the chief ringleader in the affair has surrendered on Mr. Gandhi's advice.

The only conclusion that I have been able to come to is that unless I act quickly I may well find the real beginnings of a civil war on my hands. There are many who think I have come out with a pre-conceived plan as to the transfer of power approved by HMG, which I am going to produce at the appropriate moment. I have made it quite clear in my conversations that this is not so. But I am convinced that a fairly quick decision would appear to be the only way to convert the Indian minds from their present emotionalism to stark realism and to counter the disastrous spread of strife to which I have referred above.

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In my talks with the Cabinet Ministers I asked each of them whether they agreed that law and order could only be maintained in a country like India if the police force has behind them a non-partisan high class and efficient army. Without exception they all agreed. I next asked if they agreed that the first requirement of any solution I might arrive at for the transfer of power was that it should be done in such a way as to minimise the risk of future strife and bloodshed. To this also they agreed. I asked them if they thought the Indian Army

*Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of Punjab till August 15, 1947.

would be sufficiently Indianised to stand on its own legs by June 1948. Varying views were expressed, but all agreed that only a committee of experts could answer the question.

When I asked them whether they thought that the Army could be divided along communal lines by June 1948, the Congress Members unhesitatingly said it was out of the question, but the Muslim League Members appeared to think it was possible. All however agreed that this question again could only be answered by experts.

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During the past week I have had three Cabinet meetings on consecutive days, all of which were long and difficult to handle. The Budget proved to be a particularly difficult matter to handle. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, by producing a poor man's budget and hitting the capitalists through his capital gains tax and measures against tax evasion, succeeded in putting Pandit Nehru in a difficult position, backed as the Congress Party are by money from the large industrialists and financiers.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Second Meeting March 26, 1947*

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ITEM 3. THE BREAK-UP OF COMMUNAL PARTIES ON POLITICAL LINES

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, during the conversation he had had with Nehru two days previously, the latter had agreed that the Congress Party was likely eventually to break up on political lines. The present co-operation between different shades of political feeling within Congress was based on nationalistic aspirations, and a split on party rather than communal

lines was probable after those aspirations had been achieved.

His Excellency the Viceroy gave his opinion that the whole political system in India was likely to change after the withdrawal of the British. If Mr. Jinnah could be made to realise this, and that he might become an ever more powerful political figure after the re-alignment, it might be a way of breaking down his present negative attitude.

Mr. Abell pointed out that the recent Budget negotiations had caused dissension among the ranks of the Congress Party. The compromise eventually reached had inclined considerably towards capitalism, and caused considerable dissatisfaction among the adherents to the Left. However the system of separate electorates, which had been first introduced in the Act of 1919 owing to the pressure of communal feeling, stood in the way of any split into political rather than communal parties.

His Excellency the Viceroy emphasized that public opinion in the United Kingdom would welcome a break-up of the communal parties and a re-alignment into parties corresponding to the Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Third Meeting March 27, 1947*

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## ITEM 11. THE BREAK-UP OF COMMUNAL PARTIES ON POLITICAL LINES

His Excellency the Viceroy gave his opinion that the Muslim League might well begin to disintegrate as soon as Mr. Jinnah started to make constructive proposals. He considered that the main force at present holding the Muslim League together was fear of Congress. He was not convinced either way of the wisdom of encouraging splits in the communal parties at the present time. He felt sure that Pandit Nehru must realise the

danger of the disintegration of his party—he must either be deliberately overlooking this danger or devising secret means to combat it.

His Excellency the Viceroy: Instructed the Conference Secretary to ensure that there was included in his brief of "awkward questions" the precedent of events in Burma to illustrate the inevitable political development whereby Congress, and later the Muslim League, might be expected to disintegrate.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 1 April 2, 1947**

## ANNEX 1. LETTER FROM LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE Secretary of State, TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

**Private and Secret** *India Office, Whitehall*
*April 3, 1947*

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5. The note which Jenkins enclosed with his letter of March 7 was, of course, with the purpose of indicating the need for negotiations for a Coalition Government and naturally emphasised the very strong objections which exist from the point of view of the interests of the Punjab as a whole, to any form of partition. I recognise the force of the considerations which Jenkins put forward and I appreciate that his note was drafted with the intention of bringing them home to political leaders and thus inducing a sense of compromise in which a Coalition, preferably of all three parties, might be formed. But it is very important that, if and when it is possible to make any further political move in regard to the Punjab we should consider carefully in what direction we ourselves want the situation to move

from the point of view of securing a peaceful transfer of power.

6. If a Coalition of the Muslims and Sikhs or of all three communities were secured in the Punjab it seems very likely that, if we failed to get an all-India settlement, and therefore, in the all-India sphere, had to transfer power to more than one authority, a local Coalition Government in the Province could not hold together and would inevitably break up. This might happen shortly after we had left, which would be disastrous enough for India, or would be particularly embarrassing for HMG. I think it would be bound to happen sooner or later because the Punjab Muslim League would want to join with Sind (and the NWFP if the trend against the Red-Shirt-Congress Government gathers sufficient force) in forming a Pakistan while the other elements in the Punjab Government would be strongly opposed to this and would wish the Punjab to go into the all-India constitution. Moreover, even if there were an all-India settlement it would necessarily be on the basis of minimum powers for the Central Government and autonomy in all other matters for Provinces. It would probably also have to be on the basis of grouping of Provinces. If so, I should anticipate that the Punjab Coalition Government would break down for the same reasons in those circumstances.

7. Therefore, it seems to me that, in spite of its grave practical difficulties and dangers, the partition of the Punjab to such degree and in such form as will satisfy the rival nationalisms in the Province is really unavoidable from the political point of view of the transfer of authority in June 1948. If however, we were to go for partition in the Punjab, we should, I think, have to go for it also in Bengal for broadly similar reasons. But partition of Bengal is more difficult because it involves putting Calcutta into Hindustan, because there is no local political

deadlock in Bengal existing or in sight to justify taking such a step and because the Muslim League would, I think, be much more opposed to a partition of Bengal involving the loss of Calcutta than to a partition of the Punjab.

8. It seems to me, therefore, that it would be desirable at a fairly early date for you to confer with Burrows and Jenkins together and discuss the problem with them from this all-India point of view. Perhaps you could find an opportunity to do this at the Governors' Conference which you have convened for the middle of April.

9. I am not, of course, seeking to lay down any definite view on behalf of HMG in what I have written above. (I have not, as a matter of fact, had any real opportunity of discussing the problem with my colleagues). It is merely an indication of the way my own mind is working on the matter at the moment and I am quite open to conviction. But before any positive step is taken about the Punjab situation I should be glad to have, for consideration with my colleagues, your views on the point of view I have put forward in the light of a discussion with the Governors of these two Provinces.

(SD) PETHICK-LAWRENCE

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 2 April 9, 1947**

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2. The whole country continues in a dangerously unsettled state, although communal riots and troubles appear less obvious than they did last week. The situation in Bihar and Assam is on the whole slightly better, and Calcutta and Bombay are quieter, but the NWFP and the Punjab are still most unsettled, and there has been trouble at Gurgaon, within 20 miles of Delhi, which

necessitated Jenkins' flying down to the area for a day's visit.

3. Ismay is back from his visits to Jenkins and Caroe, and has reported on the situation in the Punjab and the NWFP. Jenkins has no hope of getting out of Section 93 at present, certainly not this month and probably not next. The trouble is that a general election will solve nothing. The League would probably get majority of up to 5 out of 175 seats, and would then proceed to form a Government with a bare Muslim majority, without Sikh or Hindu representation; and then I am told there might be real trouble. The only hope of a peaceful unified Punjab lies in a Union or Coalition Government, but there seems no real hope of this, anyway at present.

4. The only alternative to a Union Government is partition of the Punjab; this is recommended by Congress but could in Jenkins' view probably only be imposed by force, which would require a lot of troops, and spell economic ruin for the Province. I referred in my last report to the Sikhs' preparations for serious civil war, and I am anxious to avoid any chance of hot-headed action on their part. On Jenkins' recommendation I have decided to call them into consultation, and have asked Baldev Singh to invite Tara Singh* and Gyani Kartar Singh† to come and see me in Delhi.

5. In the NWFP the problem, unlike the Punjab, is not a communal one, the clash being between Congress financed Muslims and the Muslim League. It is complicated by the tribes, who broadly speaking are in sympathy with the League. The present Congress Government have clapped the opposition into jail,

* Master Tara Singh, Leader of the Akali Sikhs.

† Gyani Kartar Singh, a Leader of the Akali Party and collaborator with Master Tara Singh.

and feelings are running high; meanwhile the tribes may flare up at any moment. The Governor thinks that if things are allowed to continue as at present, there must be a progressive worsening of the situation and a disintegrating frontier.

6. Caroe told Ismay that he recommends forcing a general election on the Government on the grounds that it is necessary to ascertain, beyond any shadow of doubt, to whom power should be transferred after we leave. The best way to do this would probably be to dismiss the Ministry, dissolve the House, and for the Governor to take powers under Section 93. Only thus would a clean election be assured, but it is clearly a big and difficult move which might infuriate Congress.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 3 April 17, 1947**

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2. The dangerously unsettled state of the whole country continues, and communal riots and troubles are on about the same scale as they were last week. In the Punjab the Gurgaon area is quieter, but there have been riots in Amritsar which have necessitated a 24-hour curfew. In the NWFP, rioting, looting and arson have been reported from Dera Ismail Khan. Half the city is in flames and there is severe communal fighting. Peshawar is quieter on the whole; but there has been trouble again in the Hazara district, where the District and Assistant Commissioners' cars were stoned. The tribes are still very restless, but they are acting with restraint. But the tension both in the Punjab and the NWFP is still very high. I have retained here the Governor of the NWFP (Caroe) and sent for his Prime Minister, Dr. Khan Sahib,* so as to have a meeting tonight with Nehru, as the

*Dr Khan Sahib, Chief Minister, NWFP, 1937-39 and from March 1945.

situation is so explosive.

3. In Bengal, there were more incidents in Calcutta on Sunday, April 13. In Bombay a curfew at night has been imposed; and similarly at Benares, where in addition the District Magistrate has fined the city a sum totalling nearly four lakhs of rupees for the disturbances and damage there.

4. I wish I could paint a more optimistic picture of the state of the country, but it would be wrong of me to do so, and the Governors' Conference (which I refer to at the end of this report) agrees entirely with this picture.

5. Although I am convinced, as indeed are all the Governors and leaders with whom I have discussed the matter, that the only step which is likely to clear the air of communal strife is an early and generally accepted decision on how power is to be transferred in June 1948, I felt that there was one step I could take at once to reduce the tension. I accordingly asked Mr. Jinnah when he came to see me if he would sign a joint appeal with Congress to renounce the use of force for political ends. He tried to evade a firm answer for about 20 minutes, by drawing my attention to his various speeches deploring massacres, etc. When he had finished I said, "Of course if you would find it in any way embarrassing to renounce the use of force and if I would be putting you at a disadvantage by negotiations instead of direct action, please consider the matter closed." There was an awkward pause, and he then said, "I should be proud to give a lead in this matter and am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity."

6. The next time I saw Jinnah I gave him a copy of the draft statement to take away and study. He warned me that Gandhi had refused to sign a similar appeal for Lord Wavell after the

Calcutta massacres, and he did not think I would succeed in getting Gandhi to sign this time. No decision was reached, however, as to who the precise signatories on the Congress side would be; but Ismay tells me that as Jinnah said goodbye to him he said, "Who will sign for Congress, Gandhi or Kripalani?" Ismay replied that this would probably have to be settled by Congress themselves.

7. The next day Jinnah agreed to sign if Gandhi would also sign. I therefore got hold of Gandhi who after amending the wording slightly, then and there signed the declaration in three scripts. Mieville then took the declaration to Jinnah to sign, and said that Kripalani, as President of the Congress, had agreed to sign after him. Jinnah thereupon refused to sign and said he would not sign if an unknown nobody like Kripalani was to sign on the same sheet of paper. Mieville was unable to move him or get him to accept any other signatories. On my instruction Mieville then got in touch with Nehru, who was furious but finally said he would leave it to me. Then Kripalani said that he had been instructed by Gandhi to sign and could not agree to having his name left off unless Gandhi agreed. By this time Gandhi had left by train for Patna, so I sent him a telegram, in reply to which Gandhi passed the ball back to Nehru and myself. Nehru wrote two pages of protest but finally left it to me, and so I issued the statement.

8. I have related this incident at some length to give an idea of the fantastic difficulties with which the simplest negotiations are hedged. It took us four days to get this statement through, and much time on it has been unnecessarily wasted by myself, my staff, and the most important political leaders in India. I only hope that both sides will abide by this declaration, but I fear that they may very well get out of it by accusing the other side of breaking the truce first.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 4 April 24, 1947**

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13. I had my interview last Friday with the Sikhs represented by Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh. Any hopes that I still entertained of being able to avoid the partition of the Punjab if Pakistan is forced on us were shattered at this meeting; all three Sikhs made it quite clear that they would fight to the last man if put under Muslim domination. They considered that the Cabinet Mission had let them down badly, and presented me with a book called *The Betrayal of the Sikhs* on this subject, written by Landon Sarasfield. They have an encyclopaedic knowledge of every letter that passed with the Secretary of State and of all statements made on the subject in the House of Commons and brought with them copies of *Hansard* and all the correspondence.

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15. . . . But he said he feared the situation had so deteriorated that he simply did not know how the Sikhs could be prevented from fighting, unless they were completely separated from the Punjab and guaranteed against any attacks. Even then, the preparations for civil war now going on showed what was brewing. In this connection I have seen an appeal issued by the Sikh leaders, calling for a "War Fund" of Rs 50 lakhs, which sounds very ominous.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 5 May 1, 1947**

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23. I had a long talk with Jenkins about the partitioning of the

Punjab. The bone of contention is going to be the area between the two rivers, Ravi and Sutlej, and it is going to be very difficult to produce a demarcation which will be accepted by both parties. The Sikhs in their endeavours to obtain a real "Sikhistan" are most anxious to take in a large part of the area where most of the land is owned by Sikhs but where the Muslim population predominates. To this I am absolutely opposed. The Sikhs also want their holy places preserved for them, including Lahore itself, the capital-designate of Pakistan. It is significant, however, that when the Sikh delegation saw me they particularly asked that I should not decide whether the Sikhs would join Pakistan or Hindustan, since they had not made up their minds to which side they wanted to go.

**24.** Jinnah told me that an emissary had come down asking if he would receive Kartar Singh with a view to discussions about the future of "Sikhistan." When Mieville dined with Liaquat Ali Khan, the latter also hinted that there was a chance that "Sikhistan" might join up with Pakistan, and that the Muslim League would offer them very generous terms. This would have the effect of avoiding the partition of the Punjab, since both halves would really vote to join up again. And since the principal imports are the wages and pensions of the soldiers, a split-up of the Punjab would have a very serious effect on the many Muslims living in the "Sikhistan" area as there would be no army really open to them to join.

**25.** Jenkins is of the opinion that there may be trouble on the announcement of the choice for partition, and I have disussed with him and the General Officer Commanding the necessary troops disposition to nip such trouble immediately in the bud.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 6 May 8, 1947**

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**22.** In connection with the article in *The Hindustan Times* suggesting that I was recommending an unfair division of the Punjab, the Maharaja of Patiala came round to see me last week, and told me that the Sikh leaders were perturbed because I was ruining the idea of "Sikhistan", since the partition lines I was reputed to have chosen would divide the Sikhs, with two million of them in the East Punjab and one million eight hundred thousand in the West Punjab.

**23.** I made it very clear to the Maharaja that I was only making a national partition for purposes of voting, and that if partition were decided upon by vote, then a Boundary Commission would have to be set up composed of all interested parties, to try and arrive at a sensible boundary. I told him the origin of the partition request, which was that Congress wished me to take steps to ensure that no areas in which there is a non-Muslim majority should be put into Pakistan. I pointed out that there were only 12 out of 29 districts in which there was a non-Muslim majority. I drew his attention to the fact that there was not one single district in which the Sikhs had an over-all majority, and that in no case did any of the 17 districts proposed for West Punjab have even a Hindu Sikh majority.

**24.** Patiala (and the next day Baldev Singh) appealed to me to make partition line on the basis of Sikh landed property, Sikh sacred buildings and Sikh interests. I told him that world opinion would undoubtedly be against any attempt to put Muslim majority populations of the West Punjab under Sikh Hindu Congress domination merely on ownership of land and religious grounds.

25. Patiala was rather worried, for he said, "In that case I greatly fear the Sikhs will fight." I replied, "If they do, Maharaja Sahib, they will have to fight the Central Government for I and my Government are determined to put down any attempts at communal war with a ruthless iron hand; they will be opposed not only by tanks and armoured cars and artillery, but they will be bombed and machine-gunned from the air. You can tell your Sikhs that if they start a war they will not be fighting the Muslim League, but the whole might of the armed forces." The Maharaja was visibly shaken and promised to report this to the Sikh leaders.

26. The next day in Cabinet, I raised the question of further aggression by Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus in any part of India. I asked if the Cabinet would support me to the hilt in putting down the first signs of communal war with overwhelming force, and if they agreed that we should also bomb and machine-gun them from the air, and thus prove conclusively that communal war was not going to pay. This proposed policy was acclaimed with real enthusiasm by the Congress and Muslim League members alike, and when I looked across at the Defence Member, Baldev Singh, and said, "Are you with me in this policy," he replied, "Most emphatically, yes."

27. I am quite certain that unless the communal war which is now being built up is stopped in the first round, the whole of the north of India may flare up. I have told Jenkins and his acting General Officer Commanding, Major-General Bruce, and Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Smith, the acting Commander-in-Chief, to prepare plans for moving in additional forces into the Punjab along the disputed territory between the Ravi and the Sutlej, in good time before the announcement of the voting on partition; I have also warned them to stand by on the North West Frontier, and have given Burrows the same

warning for Bengal.

**28.** I sincerely hope that HMG will support me should this eventuality arise. But I feel that if we can blot out 10,000 fanatics in the first round we may stop four hundred million people from being involved in war. In any case it will not be the British Viceroy doing this, but the whole of the Interim Coalition Government of India. It is in fact where there has been failure to curb movements of violence by sufficiently strong and quick use of armed force that massacres have spread.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 7 May 15, 1947**

ANNEX 2. LETTER FROM THE EARL OF LISTOWEL TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

**Private and Secret** *India Office, Whitehall*
*May 9, 1947*

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14. I suppose the basic fact of the situation is that the Sikhs have an exaggerated idea of their proper status in the future set-up. No doubt this is due partly to their historical position as the rulers of the Punjab, partly to the rather flattering treatment they have received from us as one of the great martial races of India, and partly to the fact that they consider that they have contributed out of proportion to their numbers to the economic wealth of the Punjab. On the other hand they are a community numbering only some 6 millions out of nearly 400 millions and in the Punjab itself they number only 4 millions among 28 millions. On any democratic basis, therefore, they must definitely be regarded as a minority (and not even as

a "major" minority). Owing to the fact in no single district of the Punjab do they constitute a majority of the population, it is out of the question to meet their claims by setting up a separate Sikh State.

15. I understand that during the Cabinet Mission these considerations were put to the Sikhs in answer to their case but evidently it has all been like water off a duck's back. It was pointed out to the Sikhs, I am told, that even minimum Pakistan would include 12 million Sikhs and that therefore the alternatives for them were to be all together in Pakistan or divided between Pakistan and Hindustan.

17. There is no doubt that the Sikhs are a very dangerous element in the situation. Under your proposal they will be divided and I do not think that any subsequent adjustment of boundaries can possibly begin to satisfy the claims they put forward. I understand from Ismay that they are asking that the Lahore Division be kept out of the partition you propose pending a Boundary Commission at which Sikh claims would be considered. But Sikh claims are based not on population but on such factors as the economic position of the Sikhs in certain parts of the Punjab and religious sentiment applying to certain areas where there are Sikh shrines. Unless the Boundary Commission were told to give weight to these factors it could not do more than make marginal adjustments in the boundaries where the division by districts in which Hindus or Muslims were in the majority. But if you are satisfied that a Boundary Commission, with terms of reference such as will help to keep the Sikhs quiet until the transfer of power, can be set up without provoking the hostility of the two major communities, I shall be very ready to support your view to my colleagues.

**18.** What the situation really calls for is a settlement between the Muslims and the Sikhs. Their interests are not necessarily irreconcilable and indeed have a good deal in common, as appears from the fact that they have worked together for many years under the Unionist party system in the Punjab. In this way the Sikhs would avoid being split up (which is their major interest) and the Muslims would get a larger and more viable Pakistan. But I fear the recent bloodletting has done much to destroy any chance of this, anyway for the present.

(SD) LISTOWEL

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 3 June 5, 1947**

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**26.** On June 5, Tuesday afternoon I saw Gyani Kartar Singh. He surprised me by saying that when the bitterness had died down he would be prepared to see Mr. Jinnah and make the best terms he could for the Sikhs, who would come into Pakistan. Needless to say I much encouraged this. He also promised that the Sikh community would not fight so long as the British were present. While expressing my gratification at this, I pointed out that they would be hit just as hard by the Indian armed forces after the transfer of power as before, and I hoped the Sikhs would not be so foolish as to commit virtual suicide.

**27.** At 4 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon I saw the fourteen members of the Princely States Negotiating Committee and gave them the partition and transfer of power printed plan, and explained it. It was surprisingly well received considering the difficulty pointed out by the Chancellor, His Highness of Bhopal. In general, the Committee agreed that the next two months must be utilised for negotiating temporary agreements on a stand-still basis to allow time for proper agreements to be entered into in due course.

28. The three leaders* had promised to broadcast that evening after me, asking that the plan should be accepted as peaceably as possible by their followers. At 7 o'clock I met them at the All-India Radio studio, and we made our broadcasts. The faces of the Muslim Leaguers when Nehru talked about allowing parts of India to secede from the Union were matched only by the expression of dismay on the faces of the Congress members.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 10 June 28, 1947**

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2. The internal situation in the country is much quieter with the unfortunate exception of the Punjab, where trouble has flared up again in Lahore, Amritsar and the Gurgaon district. In the two former the trouble is confined to arson and stabbing on a widespread scale. It is carried out by "cloak and dagger" methods and is therefore very difficult to put down. In Gurgaon, where my wife went again on June 26 there has been a long standing feud between the Meos and Jats, and now that additional troops with increased vehicles and wireless facilities have been sent in I hope that we shall be able to control the troubles. A similar Meo-Jat flare-up in the United Provinces was dealt with very quickly, as the authorities were ready for it.

3. Every responsible person is particularly worried about the situation in Lahore and Amritsar, for if we cannot stop this arson both cities will soon be burnt to the ground. In his interview with me on June 23, Jinnah begged me to be utterly ruthless in suppressing trouble in Lahore and Amritsar. He said, "I don't care whether you shoot Muslims or not, it has got to be stopped." On June 24 Nehru came to see me and talked in the same strain. He suggested turning over the cities to the

*Nehru, Jinnah, Baldev Singh.

military, withdrawing the police and declaring martial law.

4. I accordingly asked Jenkins for his views by secraphone, so that I could raise the matter in Cabinet on the following day. Jenkins replied to the effect that he had discussed a similar proposal on June 23 with the Lahore Area Commander and the Inspector General of Police and later with the local Party leaders, and had decided against it. His reasons were that since decisive action by troops against "cloak and dagger" activities was out of the question, martial law might well fail, and the troops would soon be exposed to the same communal attack as the police. To sum up, Jenkins, while admitting that the situation was causing him grave anxiety, did not think that martial law was the answer to trouble of this kind.

5. The meeting of the Cabinet on June 25 was a very difficult one. I was violently attacked by leaders of both parties for the complete failure of the "British" to maintain law and order under Section 93. Nehru, as usual, completely lost control of himself and demanded the sacking of every official, from the Governor downwards, that same day. I had to reprimand him publicly for this irresponsible suggestion. I must admit he took the rebuke very well. Patel then ranted against the British, saying that in the days when they were putting down Congress and freedom movements, they had no difficulty in keeping law and order. He said it was a case of the British covering up for the British. I told him I could not take such a slur, and he immediately said he had not meant it as a slur. Then the League started attacking me and saying that there would soon be no city left for them to inherit. Baldev chimed in with a "shoot everyone on sight" cry; upon which Patel pointed out that the only people shot by the troops were the wretched householders who were forced into the streets during curfew hours when their houses were set on fire!

6. Finally I obtained unanimous agreement that the Governor should be invited to form a Security Committee of the local leaders of the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; that this Committee sould draw up an agreed list of local officials in whom all three parties would have confidence; and that they sould be put in power wherever possible. I suggested that the Security Committee should meet every day and that all the leaders, from the High Commands downwards, should use every effort to call off all violence. These proposals were well received and I passed them on to Jenkins at once. I am glad to say that the news from Lahore is now better.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 17 August 16, 1947**

## APPENDIX IV. MEMORANDUM BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE PUNJAB ON THE MAIN CRITICISMS AGAINST THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT FOR ITS HANDLING OF THE CURRENT DISTURBANCES

*Government House, Lahore,*
*August 4, 1947*

Dear Lord Mountbatten,

Your Excellency asked me on July 20 to prepare a memorandum on the main criticism against the Punjab Government for its handling of the current disturbances. I enclose a memorandum which is, I am afraid, rather sketchy; I have a good deal of other work on my hands, and though most of the material required for a full survey is on record, it takes time to get it arranged.

2. I have not dealt in the memorandum with the allegation of partiality made at different times against me personally by the

Congress and the Muslim League. Indian politicians and journalists seldom realise that a Governor maintains very close touch with the Governor-General, and takes no important action without the Governor-General's knowledge. I am content to leave it to Lord Wavell and Your Excellency to decide whether my letters and telegrams since I took charge in the Punjab on April 8, 1946 have disclosed bias for or against any party. These documents give a complete account of political conditions in the Punjab as they appeared to me from time to time, and my appreciations and recommendations for action were generally approved both by Lord Wavell and by Your Excellency. In only one case has a critic dared to make a specific allegation—in a recent editorial in *Dawn* it was stated that the editor "had reason to believe" that I was attempting to influence the higher authorities and the Chairman of the Boundary Commission in favour of the Sikhs. The words "the higher authorities" in this context can only mean the Governor-General and Cabinet Ministers in the United Kingdom. I have certainly kept Your Excellency informed of the Sikh view, but I have never advised that it should be accepted, and I have no direct contacts of any kind with Cabinet Ministers at home—except that during disturbed periods I have, in accordance with the standing orders, sent a daily factual telegram describing events to the Secretary of State. Nor have I discussed the boundary problem with the Chairmain of the Boundary Commission or attempted to influence him or his colleagues in any way, directly or indirectly. These facts can be proved, and the falsity of this specific allegation indicates the quality of the more general allegations of partiality.

Yours sincerely,
E. M. JENKINS

## APPENDIX IV. MEMORANDUM

There have been many criticisms of the Punjab Government's handling of the disturbances of 1947. During his visit to Lahore on July 20, His Excellency the Governor-General suggested that I should record them and add my comments.

**2.** The main criticisms are:

(i) that while the British were able to crush without difficulty the disturbances of 1942, they failed to deal in the same way with the disturbances of 1947 (Congress—particularly Nehru and Patel);

(ii) that British officials have been callous and incompetent, and have taken the line that since the British are going, massacre, arson and looting are of no consequence (Congress—particularly Nehru and Patel);

(iii) that in the Punjab the worst districts have been those staffed by British officials—Indian officials have managed to maintain order (Congress—Nehru);

(iv) that Congress Governments have had no difficulty in suppressing disturbances—the worst Province of all has been the Punjab, which is still "under British rule" (Congress—Nehru);

(v) that the fire services in the cities, particularly in Lahore and Amritsar, have been inefficient and useless (Congress);

(vi) that the Magistrates and Police have been both incompetent and partial, and that the Police have connived at and actually participated in murder, arson, and looting (Congress);

(vii) that Martial Law should have been declared at least in Lahore and possibly elsewhere.(Congress).

Attacks on the administration were not confined to the Congress Party—the Muslim League were equally severe, though less precise except in their constant allegations of partiality against myself.

**3.** There are two short answers to most of these criticisms.

In the first place, the critics have missed the significance of what is happening in the Punjab. We are faced not with an ordinary exhibition of political or communal violence, but with a struggle between the communities for the power which we are shortly to abandon. Normal standards cannot be applied to this communal war of succession, which has subjected all sections of the population to unprecedented strains, has dissolved old loyalties and created new ones, and has produced many of the symptoms of a revolution.

Secondly, the critics are themselves participants in the events which they profess to deplore. During the disturbances Nehru, Patel, and Baldev Singh have visited various parts of the Punjab. They have done so nominally as Members of the Central Government, but in fact as communal leaders. To the best of my belief not one of them made during these visits any contact of importance with any Muslim. Nehru was balanced and sensible, but Baldev Singh on at least two occasions went in for most violent communal publicity, and Patel's visit to Gurgaon was used to make it appear that the Hindus in that district were the victims of Muslim aggression, whereas broadly the contrary was the case. Conversely when Liaquat Ali Khan or Ghazanfar Ali Khan* visited the Punjab, they did so not to assist the administration, but to assist the Muslims. When a Hindu leader talks about "utter ruthlessness" or "martial law", he means that he wants as many Muslims as possible shot out of hand; Muslims are less fond of these terms, but all communities, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh persist in regarding themselves as blameless. Moreover, there is very little doubt that the disturbances have in some degree been organised and paid for by persons or bodies directly or indirectly under the control of the Muslim League, the Congress, and the Akali party. The

*Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Member, Council, All-India Muslim League and Member for Health in the Interim Government.

evidence of this is to be found in the daily intelligence summaries, and in the solicitude with which prominent men—particularly among the Hindus—take up the cases of suspects belonging to their own community.

Criticisms which are based upon a genuine or studied misconception of the real situation, and which are made by people with an intense personal interest in the communal struggle cannot be accepted at their face value.

4. Before the criticisms are examined individually, some understanding of the Punjab background is essential. From 1921 to the end of 1942 the Punjab was dominated by homegrown Muslim leaders powerful enough to control, or at least to influence very greatly, the policy of the Muslim League as a whole. These leaders saw clearly that the Punjab as it stood then, and still stands until August 15, could not be governed by a communal party, Muslim or non-Muslim. They therefore developed the Unionist idea—a United Punjab, with a Unionist Party open to members of all communities, under Muslim leadership. As the Muslim League gained strength, the Muslim Unionists were driven to equivocation. They could not deny Pakistan and endeavoured to treat it as a matter external to the Punjab; but it was clear from the first that Pakistan was a vital internal issue and that sooner or later the Punjabi Muslims would have to accept it fully and join the League, or reject it and maintain the Unionist idea. With the death of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan* at the end of 1942, the Unionist Party began to disintegrate. The last Unionist Ministry under Malik Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana† continued uneasily until the General Election of 1945-46 which was fought on the most bitter com-

*Sardar Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Premier of the Punjab from 1937-42.
†Nawab Malik Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, Premier of the Punjab from 1942-47.

munal lines. Only eight or nine Muslim Unionists survived; with one or two exceptions Hindu Unionists were defeated or absorbed by the Congress Party; and Sikh Unionists joined the Panthic Party. The Punjab had reached the worst possible position, so long avoided, in which practically all Muslims were on one side of the fence and practically all non-Muslims on the other.

The situation might have been saved by a genuine coalition between the Muslim League on the one hand and the Congress or the Panthic Party on the other. But communal feeling was too strong, and both the Muslim League and the Congress were under orders from outside the Punjab. A country with thirty million inhabitants was sucked into the vortex of all-India politics; Punjabis ceased to be Punjabis and became Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs—the Sikhs alone retaining their political independence. In the upshot a makeshift coalition was formed between the Congress, the Panthic Party, and the small Unionist remnant, under the leadership of Malik Sir Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana.

The new Coalition Ministry took office in March 1946; when I assumed charge as Governor on April 8, 1946, it had just weathered the Budget Session of the Assembly, but had attempted no legislation. The Ministers lacked confidence in themselves and in one other. They were cordially hated by the Muslim League Opposition, and had no contacts with the Opposition. In fact until the Ministry resigned in March 1947, I was the only member of the Government who could meet members of the Opposition naturally and without constraint.

During the remainder of 1946 the Coalition Ministry managed better than might have been expected. The Ministers were terrified of the Legislature, and when in July 1946, a Session became inevitable for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, they used their small majority to secure the Adjournment as soon as the obligatory business was over. They were

most ingenious in avoiding legislation, thus depriving the Opposition of opportunities of constitutional combat; they were equally ingenious in annoying members of the Opposition in various small ways. Many of the Muslim League complaints against the Ministry were exaggerated or untrue; but the tactics and conduct of the Coalition Ministry were intensely annoying to the Muslim League, and with some reason. The largest single party had been shut out of office, and might have to wait indefinitely for its turn.

In these highly explosive conditions, the news of communal disorders on an unprecedented scale in Bombay, Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar, the Western United Provinces and the NWFP caused great alarm. The Coalition Ministry took strong action. Minor trouble which occurred in Amritsar and Multan early in the summer had been effectively dealt with; and more serious disturbances at Ludhiana and Rohtak later in the year were quickly suppressed. The Rohtak disturbances were directly connected with those in the Western United Provinces, and were extremely dangerous. A "civil war" atmosphere was at this stage developing throughout the Punjab, and all communities were arming for a struggle which seemed inevitable. The Punjab Public Safety Ordinance, promulgated in November 1946, reflected the views of the Ministry on the situation.

The Ministry saw that "private armies" might play a large part in communal strife. Two of these—the Muslim League National Guards and the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh—were prominent and were growing rapidly. The Sikhs had disbanded their Akali Sena about 1940, and it was thought undesirable that they should have an excuse for reviving it. In January 1947 the Ministry accordingly banned the Muslim League National Guards and the Rashtria Swayam Sewak Sangh under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908. I had advocated this action some months earlier, and concurred in the January decision.

The banning of the Muslim League National Guards was the signal for a Civil Disobedience movement by the Muslim League. This movement was modelled on the Congress movements of the nineteen-twenties, and its object being to dislodge a "popular" Ministry, it was clearly unconstitutional. The "defence of civil liberties" was an inadequate cloak for the real intentions of the demonstrators. By the middle of February the Coalition Ministry decided to compromise with the Muslim League, and did so on about February 26. The movement has induced a universal contempt for law and order, and the extreme arrogance of the demonstrators had alarmed the non-Muslims to the point of hysteria.

In the meantime on February 20, HMG had announced their intention of leaving India not later than June 30, 1948, and of transferring power to a successor Government, or to successor Governments whose identity was unknown. The Muslims were anxious, and apparently almost ready, to seize the whole of the Punjab for Pakistan; the non-Muslims were passionately determined that they should not do so.

The Coalition Ministry, shaken by the Civil Disobedience Movement, and profoundly depressed by the Statement of February 20, decided initially to see the Budget session through, and to attempt during or after the Session some party readjustments. That at least was the Premier's intention, in which his colleagues concurred. But quite suddenly, and for reasons not fully known to me, the Premier decided on March 2, to resign. He did so late in the evening, and on March 3, after seeing the Finance and Development Minister (to whom the Premier's decision had been a considerable shock), I sent for Mamdot* and asked him to form a Ministry.

The non-Muslims believed that a Muslim League Ministry would destroy them and there was little hope of a Coalition,

*Iftikhar Husain Khan, Leader of the Muslim League in the Punjab.

without which Mamdot could not count on a majority in the Assembly. To clinch the matter the Congress and Panthic Sikhs held a large meeting in Lahore on the evening of March 3, at which very violent speeches were made. On the morning of March 4, rioting broke out in Lahore.

On the evening of March 4, the outgoing Ministers refused to carry on in accordance with the usual convention; and since on March 5, Mamdot showed no signs of producing a Ministry, a proclamation under Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935, was made on the evening of that date.

Thus I assumed direct personal charge of the Punjab with the Muslims intent upon the communal domination of the whole of it, the non-Muslims determined not to submit to Muslim domination, fighting in progress in the principal cities and the prospect of "vacant possession" for some person or persons unknown not later than June 30, 1948. I was without Advisers, because a sufficient number of senior officials was not available. It was clear that a communal Ministry—Muslim or non-Muslim—had no hope of survival. It was equally clear that a new Coalition was out of the question Between March 1947 and June 1948 officials would inevitably be driven to take sides, and the services would disintegrate. The prospects were therefore not encouraging.

It has been represented from time to time that Mamdot could have formed a Ministry during March. In fact Mamdot showed little eagerness to form a Ministry—the events of the first half of March were too much for him—and it is my belief that he has not at any time had the support of a majority in the Assembly.

Rioting broke out in Lahore City on March 4, as I have said above. The disturbances since that date have fallen into three main phases:

(i) March 4 to March 20. Rioting in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, Jullundur and Sialkot cities. Rural

massacres of non-Muslims in Rawalpindi, Attock and Jhelum districts of Rawalpindi Division, and in Multan district, casualties very heavy, and much burning especially in Multan and Amritsar. I was able to report on March 21, that order had been restored everywhere.

(ii) March 21 to May 9. Minor incidents in many districts. Serious rioting and burning in Amritsar April 11-13, with some repercussions in Lahore. Trouble at Hodal, a small town in Gurgaon district, followed by the first outbreak along the Mewat in the same district.

(iii) May 10, onwards. The communal "war of succession". Incendiarism, stabbing, and bombing in Lahore and Amritsar.

Serious incidents reported from various districts, particularly Gujranwala and Hoshiarpur. Urban rioting almost unknown, and all activities in cities, including some organised raids, conducted on "cloak and dagger" basis. Village raiding begins, especially in Amritsar, Lahore, Ferozepore, Jullundur, and Hoshiarpur districts. Revival of disturbances in Gurgaon with 140 villages burnt and very heavy casualties.

The first phase presented many of the features of normal communal disturbances of the past. The urban slaughter was without precedent (in Multan city about 130 non-Muslims were killed in three hours), and the wholesale burnings both urban and rural, and the rural massacres were new. But on the whole, the situation yielded to the usual treatment.

The second phase was used by the communities for preparations. It was relatively quiet, but there was much practising with bombs, and ill-feeling never really died down in Lahore and Amritsar.

The third phase showed the real dimensions of the problem. The communities settled down to do the maximum amount of damage to one another while exposing the minimum expanse of surface to the troops and police. Mass terrorism of this kind offers no easy answer—troops and police can act, and some-

times act decisively, against riotous mobs. They can do little against burning, stabbing and bombing by individuals. Nor can all the King's horses and all the King's men prevent—though they may be able to punish—conflict between communities interlocked in villages over wide areas of the country.

The casualties in all three phases as reported up to August 2, are:

| | *Killed* | *Seriously injured* |
|---|---|---|
| A. *Urban* | | |
| Lahore | 382 | 823 |
| Amritsar | 315 | 666 |
| Multan | 131 | 133 |
| Rawalpindi | 99 | 230 |
| Other cities | 117 | 171 |
| | 1044 | 2023 |
| B. *Rural* | | |
| Rawalpindi | 2164 | 167 |
| Attock | 620 | 30 |
| Jhelum | 210 | 2 |
| Multan | 58 | 50 |
| Gurgaon | 284 | 125 |
| Amritsar | 110 | 70 |
| Hoshiarpur | 51 | 19 |
| Jullundur | 47 | 51 |
| Other districts | 44 | 36 |
| | 3588 | 550 |
| C. *Total* | 4632 | 2573 |

The figures are clearly incomplete, especially for Gurgaon, where the dead and wounded are usually removed by their own party. In my opinion not less than 5,000 (and probably not part of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, and the Commanders employed under him; and the troops, who were required to perform unpleasant tasks in conditions of great discomfort, behave admirably.

Special powers for dealing with the disturbances were taken in the Punjab Disturbed Areas Act, 1947, the Punjab Disturbed Areas (Special Powers of Armed Forces) Ordinance, 1947, and the Punjab Public Safety Act, 1947.

I turn now to a detailed examination of the criticisms set out in paragraph 2 of this memorandum.

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**6.** (i) That while the British were able to crush without difficulty the disturbances of 1942, they failed to deal in the same way with the disturbances of 1947.

The disturbances of 1942 were most serious in the United Provinces and Bihar. They were not crushed without difficulty in these Provinces, and I doubt if Bihar has been completely normal since they took place. In the Punjab, where the disturbances of 1942 were conducted by a handful of Congressmen, and the great mass of the people were not opposed to the War effort, they were of little importance.

The disturbances of 1942 in the Provinces in which they were serious were (a) initiated by a single political party, against (b) Governments actually at war, which (c) had at the time no intention whatever of transferring power to any other authority.

The disturbances of 1947 were (a) initiated by the communities, against (b) one another in the presence of (c) a Government which was to transfer power to an unknown successor or successors not later than June 1948.

The object of the disturbances of 1947 was to facilitate the

defeat of the British in War by the Germans and the Japanese.

The object of the disturbances of 1947 was to secure a more favourable position for one community or the other on the transfer of power (e.g. in the Rawalpindi Division the underlying idea was to eliminate the non-Muslim fifth column; in Lahore the Muslims wanted to scare away the non-Muslim element in the population, and so on).

In 1942 attacks were concentrated on Government property and Government servants, in other words on points that were largely known.

In 1947 little attention was paid to Government property and Government servants—the "two nations" fought one another in the streets, in the markets, in the fields, and in the villages. When it was found that rioting could be checked, the fighting took the form of mass terrorism.

The critics are evidently not comparing like with like. There is no resemblance whatever between the two situations. A more relevant comparison is between 1946 and 1947. Throughout 1946 the Punjab was in grave danger. The measures taken to deal with communal trouble were essentially my own, though constitutionally taken by the Ministry, and I had at my disposal the same resources as I had in 1947. It was the knowledge that power was to be transferred that made the disturbances of 1947 so much more widespread and persistent than those of 1946.

7. (ii) That British officials have been callous and incompetent, and have taken the line that since the British are going, massacre, arson and looting are of no consequence.

This criticism is easy to make, but difficult to prove or to disprove. In two cases I was informed that British officials had told persons who asked for help that they should "consult Nehru or Patel". On enquiry the allegations in both cases were found to be false. I attribute the criticism to two main causes—first that the British as a race do not always talk seriously about

things which they take seriously; and secondly that, to use the current psychological jargon, the average educated Indian is compelled to rationalize the behaviour of his countrymen. As an example of the first cause, Nehru was evidently shocked at a reference by the former Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon to the "score" of casualties, but it is a convenient way of expressing a thought always in the mind of an experienced District officer, namely, that trouble seldom stops when the number of combatants are roughly equal until casualties are also roughly equal. The second cause is less definite, but the role of scapegoat or whipping boy is not unfamiliar to officials in India.

I am satisfied that no British official has been callous. There are not many British officials left, and those actually concerned with the disturbances have worked with devotion and humanity. They have been incessantly baited by the politicians.

Competence is a different matter. Two officers of the Indian Police and one member of the Indian Civil Service broke down and either asked or had to be relieved. The strain of prolonged civil disturbances differs from that of War, but is not less severe. I have experience both of the Indian Civil Service and of the Police who maintained the high traditions of their respective Services. They have certainly not been influenced by their approaching departure. In particular the Inspector-General of Police and the few British officers of his headquarters staff—all of whom are heavily worked—have taken duty voluntarily in Lahore city night after night, in the central room, on patrol, and extinguishing fires.

The criticism assumes that we have failed, and that the small remaining body of British officials is responsible for the failure. In fact, nobody who has not lived through the last six months in the Punjab can conceive of the dangers we have escaped. To take a Province of thirty million people noted for their pugnacity, to whip these people into a communal frenzy, to tell them that the authority, which has held the ring for nearly a century is going

almost immediately, to divide their Province into two parts by a boundary driven through an area homogenous in everything but religion, and to convert its two principal cities into frontier towns—these are surely no ordinary operations, and if the critics thought that they would not be attended by disorder, the critics were wrong. It is largely owing to the steadiness and impartiality of the British officials that the Punjab has got through as well as it has.

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13. If I have succeeded in showing that we have in the Punjab the kind of situation in which people fight a situation as real as that in Palestine which incidentally is about equal in area to, and considerably smaller in population than the Multan and Muzaffargarh Districts; that the critics themselves are in part responsible for this situation and have given no help to the authorities; that talk about the inefficiency of British rule ignores the fact that the object of the present exercise is to eliminate it; and that on the whole we have done our best in an intolerably difficult situation; this memorandum will have served its purpose. The future is unknown and it would be idle to speculate upon it. But it is a certainty that our present critics will have it both ways—if things go badly it will be because the British made them so, if things go well it will be because of Indian efficiency. It is perhaps worth pointing out that the grouping of forces and the problems to be solved will be entirely different from August 15, and that neither improvement nor deterioration after that date will prove anything whatever.

E. M. JENKINS
Governor of the Punjab
4.8.47

## C. COMMUNAL TURMOIL IN NWFP

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Eighth Meeting April 4, 1947*

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### ITEM 12. NOTE OF AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR OF THE NWFP AND LORD ISMAY ON APRIL 2, 1947

The Meeting considered a Note which Lord Ismay had perpared on an interview which he had had with the Governor of the NWFP on April 2.

His Excellency the Viceroy made reference to a letter written by Pandit Nehru to Sir Olaf Caroe. In this Pandit Nehru told Sir Olaf that he had suggested to Lord Wavell that Sir Olaf should resign. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he gave Pandit Nehru considerable credit for having been honest enough to repeat to the Governor's face what he had said to the Viceroy. Lord Wavell had explained to him the circumstances which led up to this state of affaris. Sir Olaf Caroe had advised Pandit Nehru in strong terms not to visit the Frontier as he could not be responsible for his safety. In fact it had been Lord Wavell who had stopped Pandit Nehru from going, but the latter had attributed the refusal to Sir Olaf Caroe and had rather naturally felt it very strongly that he was not allowed to visit a Province where there was a Congress Government nor those regions which were his responsibility as Member for External Affairs.

Mr. Abell then gave a beief explanation of the circumstances which had led up to an enquiry into the behaviour of the local Commissioner at the time of Pandit Nehru's visit, and his eventual exoneration by a Madras High Court Judge. Lord Wavell had written to the Governor of the NWFP asking that arrangements shouid be made for this official* to go on leave

until his retirement, but no answer had yet been received.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, in this particular issue, as in all others, it was necessary to face up to realities. . . . To that end Pandit Nehru was indispensable. It had also to be realised that, unless the British members of the Services played their part to the last, there would be a loss of prestige and honour; therefore it was equally essential that there should be no victimisation of British officials. These two essentials were practically impossible to reconcile. One way out might be to bring all those concerned face to face after having seen them individually. There were doubtless other possibilities, which he wished Lord Ismay to look into. He himself might have to point out to Pandit Nehru the immensely injurious results which would follow from the latter getting killed on the Frontier. It was apparent that Pandit Nehru desired much closer control than he at present exercised. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he wanted a brief of the precise legal and political situation.

His Excellency the Viceroy added that he had great faith that, if Pandit Nehru could be caught at the right moment, there was no man more quickly able to shed all traces of emotionalism. It was, however, necessary to choose the right moment—as was shown by an incident at the previous day's Cabinet Meeting. A report had come forward that Travancore had made an agreement with a "foreign" power (which was presumably Great Britain) over the disposal of her uranium deposits. Pandit Nehru had been by no means dispassionate over this issue, and had in the end declared that he would in the extreme, send the Indian Air Force to bomb Travancore.

Lord Ismay stressed the unnaturalness of the present situation in the NFWP and gave his opinion that the tribesmen were most unlikely to tolerate it indefinitely.

His Excellency the Viceroy directed CVS to perpare for him a brief on the situation in the NWFP with particular

reference to methods of solving the issue between Sir Olaf Caroe and Pandit Nehru.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Eighteenth Meeting April 21, 1947*

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ITEM 3. THE CHOICE BY PROVINCES OF THEIR OWN FUTURE

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(*b*) *The North-West Frontier Province*

His Excellency the Viceroy said that there was a further grave difficulty in connection with the NWFP. Sir Olaf Caroe was under the gravest and most constant attack by Congress. Lord Wavell had stalled off a request by Pandit Nehru that Sir Olaf Caroe should be asked to resign. Pandit Nehru agreed not to repeat this request to him (His Excellency) until he had had time to study the situation himself, but this request might not now be long delayed. Sardar Patel had made grave accusations against Sir Olaf Caroe. Dr. Khan Sahib had accused him of "running the Muslim League" in the NWFP. Incidentally, when Mr. Jinnah had been told of these accusations, he had been furious. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he was personally convinced that Sir Olaf Caroe was completely honest but his very honesty put him in a practically impossible position. Mr. Krishna Menon and others accused not only the Governor, but all British officials in the NWFP of being pro-Muslim League.

His Excellency recalled that Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had said that he hoped that he would not yield to the Congress pressure to remove the present Governor. But he had warned Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan of what he had told the Governor himself—that circumstances might lead to his having to call for his resignation.

His Excellency the Viceroy stated that he considered that whoever was responsible for turning over tribal affairs with the External Affairs Portfolio to Pandit Nehru, had caused a most embarrassing situation. It should surely have been an elementary precaution to continue to reserve this subject to the Viceroy himself. He was now put in a position, through that action, of Pandit Nehru being responsible to him for tribal affairs. Pandit Nehru was persumably at liberty now to write to him (His Excellency) and state that it was a choice between Sir Olaf Caroe and himself.

His Excellency the Viceroy emphasized that, if Sir Olaf Caroe did have to resign, it would be with complete honour. He felt that Sir Olaf Caroe would have to stay on at any rate until the Province was put under Section 93 as any successor before that time would not have a chance with Dr. Khan Sahib. He asked whether it would be possibe to appoint a high level Political Adviser with a new Governor. Sir Eric Mieville said that he considered that this would depend on whether the successor Governor had experience of the Frontier or not. His Excellency the Viceroy said that in any case he considered that such an appointment would be desirable.

During discussion of the desirability of holding a referendum in the North-West Frontier Province, it was felt that the main advantages of this course would be:

(*a*) It would be a far better way of finding out the will of the people and of removing weightage than under the system at present envisaged in the draft announcement whereby the decision is left in the hands of three persons;

(*b*) the issue (choice of joining up with Pakistan or Hindustan) would be straightforward and readily understood by the people;

(*c*) it would not involve a great loss of time or great increase in administrative arrangements in view of the fact that an election was to be held anyhow.

**Viceroy's Presonal Reports**
**Report No. 6 May 8, 1947**

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13. In the meanwhile, however, Congress leaders have made it clear to me that if I were to yield to force by dissolving the NWFP Ministry and going into Section 93, not only would this be wrong morally and legally but it would shake the confidence of Congress in my impartiality, and might well invite violence in other parts of India leading to further attempts to overthrow legally constituted and popularly elected Governments.

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21. I am still rather unhappy about the tribes beyond the boundary of the NWFP. They are behaving quite normally at present, but there is an air of expectancy and I am afraid that they are keenly watching for any situation which will open for them the door to loot.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 8 June 5, 1947**

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33. This afternoon, June 5, I received a telegram from Caroe saying that in the absence of the Premier he had seen two members of the Government who said they refused to accept paragraph 4 of the announcement and would not in any circumstances co-operate in the referendum. I immediately sent for Khan Sahib and told him that I could not possibly accept his attitude and he promised to fly back to the Frontier tomorrow and get their people to accept paragraph 4 and help with the referendum.

34. A number of people whom I have met since the announce-

ment have all told me they believe the communal tension to have been greatly relieved by this announcement and that a new feeling of hope and expectancy was abroad, at all events throughout Delhi. I am under no illusion that to retain this spirit will require the most careful handling of the situation; for the smallest high level incident could upset it again.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 15 August 2, 1947**

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19. I have run into difficulty over the question of the Ministry in the NWFP. The present Ministry is of course, a Congress Ministry and has refused to resign in spite of the adverse result of the referendum. Dr. Khan Sahib, the Premier, originally indicated that he would be prepared to resign if the referendum went decisively against him, but possibly on insturctions from the High Command, he has withdrawn this decision, and now says he sees no reason why his Ministry should resign until there is a General Election or he is defeated in the Legislature, in which, the Congress with the weightage of the minorities, have a considerable majority.

20. It is within my legal powers to direct the Governor to dismiss the Ministry and that decision cannot be called to question. On the other hand such action would be contrary to normal constitutional practice since the Ministry undoubtedly have a majority in the Legislature, and would almost certainly be taken amiss by Congress, who wish their Ministry kept as long as possible as a matter of prestige.

21. I informed Lockhart that I would take the advice of the Provisional Government of Pakistan on this issue and make them take the major responsibility for the decision. The advice they

gave me at this morning's Pakistan Cabinet meeting was that I should direct the Governor to ask the Ministry to resign and, if they refused, to dismiss them. I said that I did not want, in my last fortnight as Viceroy to do something which could be alleged to be unconstitutional and although I recognised the difficulties I thought it would be better to get the Governor to issue a sort of standstill order so that League interests should not be damaged during the next fortnight by any action taken by the Congress Ministry.

**22.** This did not go down well and ultimately the advice given me was that if I could not direct that the Ministry be dismissed I should order the Governor to go into Section 93 and take on the Muslim League team as his advisers. I was urged so admit that unless a change was made soon the Muslim League would inherit chaos in the NWFP on August 15.

**23.** Ultimately I promised to accept the advice of my colleagues provided I was assured by the experts that it was constitutionally correct. I also said that I must refer the matter to London before taking a final decision. Jinnah has always stalled on matters he does not wish to give me a decision on. He can hardly complain if I follow suit.

## D. COMMUNAL TURMOIL IN BENGAL

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Second Meeting April 25, 1947*

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### ITEM 7. PROPOSALS FOR A MEETING WITH INDIAN LEADERS

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he considered it highly

probable that the Muslims would demand a plebiscite for Calcutta and the areas immediately surrounding that city. He understood that the population there was composed of a quarter Muslim, a quarter Caste Hindus and the remaining half Scheduled Caste Hindus and other minorites. He believed that both Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan thought that the Muslim League would win a plebiscite in the Calcutta area. He foresaw that, at the meeting which it was proposed to hold, there would be much argument over the future of Calcutta. It was, after all, the second largest city in the Empire and its fate was bound to be a major issue. He pointed out that the avowed intention of referring the choice of their future to the Indian people themselves was that a completely fair answer should be obtained. It would be most undesirable to lay down a procedure of self-determination which would give the wrong answer. There were several possible lines to take. For example:

(*a*) Should it be stated that there was not time for a plebiscite anywhere and that it was essential that there was consistency in the procedure adopted throughout India?

(*b*) Should it be decided on that there should be a plebiscite in Calcutta and the immediately surrounding areas? Theoretically was it the only fair way to hold a plebiscite? Or

(*c*) Would such a plebiscite lead to bloodshed and excessive delay? Or

(*d*) Should a plebiscite perhaps be held at a later date?

(*e*) Should Calcutta be declared a free city?

Lord Ismay gave his opinion that, once any exceptions to the general procedure were allowed, there would be pressure for other exceptions to be made—for example in Lahore. Mr. Scott agreed with this and said that the same was true of Assam. Mr. Abell pointed out that Calcutta was a creation of the British and the Hindus as far as the Capital was concerned. Mr. Christie stated that Mr. Tyson had been quite clear that Calcutta should be part of Western Bengal. He felt that a plebiscite would be

a sure way of inviting a blood-bath. Lord Ismay suggested that Mr. Christie should fly to Calcutta to discuss the draft announcement with the Governor of Bengal and that Mr. Abell should go and discuss it with the Governor of Punjab. His Excellency the Viceroy approved this suggestion. He also said that Sir Akbar Hydari (who it was believed, was still in Delhi), should be called for consultation.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-Fourth Meeting May 31, 1947*

## ITEM 2. BENGAL

His Excellency the Viceroy referred to a letter which he had received from the Governor of Bengal, who asked him to grant an interview to Mr. Suhrawardy,* and stated that both parties in Bengal were preparing to be attacked if there was a decision in favour of the partition of that Province. Such a situation was in his opinion very likely to lead to serious trouble.

His Excellency the Viceroy asked Sir Eric Mieville to arrange for him to see Mr. Suhrawardy that afternoon. He went on to point out that HMG had declared themselves willing to agree to an independent Bengal—in fact willing to agree to any solution for Bengal with which the Leaders of the principal parties agreed. However, Pandit Nehru had stated that he would not agree to Bengal being independent. Therefore the only profitable line of negotiation at present was to find out whether the leaders would agree to Bengal being given a status similar to that of an Indian State and being allowed to negotiate its own separate agreements with either side.

*H.S. Suhrawardy, Chief Minister of Bengal from 1946.

Sir John Colville* stated that Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had told him that he considered that the future of Calcutta was the most difficult point of all. His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that HMG had decided that it would not be praticable to declare Calcutta a free city. They had also ruled that Dominion status would not be granted to East Bengal independently. In his opinion, Eastern Bengal was likely to be a great embarrassment to Pakistan. Presumably Pandit Nehru considered that Eastern Bengal was bound sooner or later to rejoin India.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Twenty-Sixth Meeting June 1, 1947*

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ITEM 4. BENGAL

Reference was made to a letter addressed to Sir Eric Mieville by Mr. Suhrawardy. The two points which Mr. Suhrawardy stressed were:

(*a*) The necessity for holding a referendum in Bengal, so that the true wishes of the Scheduled Castes could be ascertained, and

(*b*) The desirability of Calcutta being a free city, if only for a limited period.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that Congress reaction against any suggestion of Calcutta becoming a free city was likely to be extremely strong. However, Congress might consider it if it was only for a limited period and under a neutral authority, preferably the Governor-General.

Mr. Abell said that he considered that any changes in the Draft Announcements at this stage, to deal with either the

*Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay from March, 1943.

opinions of the Scheduled Castes or special arrangements for Calcutta, would prejudice the chance of Congress accepting the Plan as a whole.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he entirely shared this viewpoint. The question of Calcutta could come up after the main meetings. If, however, he was attacked on this point or on the Scheduled Castes at these meetings, it was essential that he should be properly briefed to give the right replies.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 5 May 1, 1947**

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28. If it were possible to have a worse headache than the NWFP and the Punjab, then Bengal provides it. Although Burrows had originally agreed, albeit reluctantly, to my plan for voting on the partition of Bengal, by the time I sent my Joint Private Secretary to see him he had changed his mind and wanted Calcutta to be a free city under joint control. I offered to fly down to see Burrows direct from the Punjab, as I knew he was still a pretty sick man, but Burrows replied that he would fly up to Delhi to see me, and he arrived on the evening of Wednesday April 30.

29. The next morning we had a long meeting over the question of Calcutta being kept out of any partition and put under joint control. I explained to Burrows that though that might be a solution which would commend itself to his Muslims and possibly to his Congress Bengalis, I was quite certain that the whole scheme would be wrecked if I now introduced this new condition at this late hour, since Congress would be bound to reject any such suggestion. To force it through against their wishes might cause them to resign from the Government; and from the all-India point of view his proposal was not acceptable.

He took my ruling in a very good spirit, saying that although it would make the situation difficult in Bengal and might cause riots in Calcutta, the difficulties of all-India must of course take precedence over any provincial difficulties.

30. We then put our heads together to see what could be done to help over the Calcutta situation, and as a result of our discussions I am having my plan slightly redrafted. Whereas it was my original intention to have one straight vote taken on a single day by all the Bengal members of the Constituent Assembly on the issue of "partition or unity" and that only if unity were decided upon would a further vote be taken on whether they wished to be independent or to go to Pakistan or Hindustan; my new proposal is that there should be provision for a preliminary vote in Bengal (and therefore of course also in the Punjab) by all the Provincial members of the Constituent Assembly to decide whether on the assumption that the Province remains unified, they want to be independent or to join Pakistan or Hindustan. A week or a fortnight later another vote will be taken to decide whether they want partition or not, in the light of this.

31. Burrows' great point is that his Chief Minister, Suhrawardy, is almost certain to be able to fix voting in favour of independence, since he has 33 out of 60 seats and Jinnah has given him permission not to join Pakistan. Once the issue is clear before the members that they have to decide between independence or partition and not between going to Pakistan or partition, Burrows thinks there is an outside chance that the Province will remain united. I have no doubt myself that unity is necessary for Bengal; for if the Province is divided, eastern Bengal even with Sylhet will be an uneconomic entity which is bound gradually to fail, and cannot receive any help from the rest of Pakistan. If they wish to ruin Calcutta, it lies within their power

to do so by refusing to grow any more jute and growing food instead.

32. I asked him what the situation was like in Bengal. I said, "Are you still sitting on a barrel of gunpowder?" to which he replied, "Good Lord no, we got off that a long time ago and are now sitting on a complete magazine which is going to blow up at any time."

33. He told me that the trouble with the police force has now become really serious, and that on Tuesday night some of the Gurkhas went and attacked the Punjabi Musulmans, killing five and wounding five with rifle fire. The Bengal Government have suspended B. Company from duty and propose to dismiss all doubtful elements, which he says will prove to be at least 800 or 1200 Gurkha policemen. They intend to use soldiers temporarily on police duties, which I do not like but suppose is unavoidable, and are going to raise new police as fast as they can.

34. The more I look at the problem in India the more I realise that all this partition business is sheer madness and is going to reduce the economic efficiency of the whole country immeasurably. No-one would ever induce me to agree to it were it not for this fantastic communal madness that has seized everybody and leaves no other course open.

35. To give you one small horrifying example: my wife had Miss Jinnah to tea again last week whilst he was with me. She told Miss Jinnah that she had spent that morning at the Lady Irwin College, and was so delighted to find how happily that institution was working and on what excellent terms the Hindu and Muslim girls were. She quoted the example that in one class of 14 Hindu and 2 Muslim girls, the class had elected one of

the two Muslims to be their Head Girl. To this Miss Jinnah replied, "Don't be misled by the apparent contentment of the Muslim girls there; we haven't been able to start our propaganda in that college yet."

36. I might add that Hindus are nearly as bad, and that the determination, from the highest to the lowest in the land, to make out that the opposite religionists are devils incarnate as well as crooks, makes any sensible solution appear out of the question. The most we can hope to do, as I have said before, is to put the responsibility for any of these mad decisions fairly and squarely on the Indian shoulders in the eyes of the world, for one day they will bitterly regret the decision they are about to make.

37. I feel it my duty to continue to support the Cabinet Mission plan to the last, since I am convinced it is the one reasonable solution for India. Jinnah has repeatedly said that he does not want to discuss it any further since he knows that the Congress do not mean to play fair, and intend to use their permanent majority at the Centre to crush Pakistan. I therefore discussed with Patel a possible compromise whereby there should be a system of voting on communal questions similar to that in vogue for the Constituent Assembly. Patel warned me, "If you raise this question of parity you will incur the everlasting enmity of Congress; that is the one thing we have been fighting against and will never agree to."

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 8 June 5, 1947**

I got back from London late on the night of Friday, May 30, but decided I would not see any leader, formally, before the meeting on Monday. It was essential, however, to find out the

latest position about Bengal, so I arranged for Mieville to see Suhrawardy and bring him in to me—so that the interview would not appear in the Court Circular. I was distressed to learn from Suhrawardy that Kiran Shankar Roy had been unable to persuade the Congress High Command to allow Bengal to vote for independence. Suhrawardy pleaded for Calcutta to be allowed to be a free city during the period of partition, since he felt that in this period communal bitterness would thus be relaxed and sufficient confidence might be reestablished for the Congress eventually to decide to leave it a free city. Otherwise he feared that nothing he could do would prevent riots and great damage in the city before partition. I sent V.P. Menon to see Patel to obtain his agreement to six months joint control of Calcutta. Patel's reply was very firm, "Not even for six hours!"

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5. Very bad riots were in full swing once more in the Gurgaon district of the Punjab, not far from Delhi. I sent an aeroplane for the Governor, Jenkins; met him at Palam airfield; and motored with him to the riot areas. The trouble appears to have been started by the Hindus this time.

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29. At ten o'clock on Wednesday morning I held a Press conference in the Constituent Assembly Hall, attended by upwards of 200 press men. For two and a quarter hours I was under violent cross-fire on every conceivable subject, but mostly about the Sikhs, about the States, and about Pakistan being allowed to retain Dominion status. I luckily knew my subject pretty well, having been immersed in it for two months and feel I was able to answer all the questions to most people's satisfaction. At all events the follow-up in all sections of today's press has been more favourable than the most sanguine of us could have hoped for.

**30.** Suhrawardy came to see me again after the announcement. For a Muslim leader living in West Bengal he showed surprising courage and determination to build a worthwhile Eastern Pakistan. He was already full of plans, the principal one being to acquire the necessary machinery, power plants etc., to put Eastern Bengal on its feet. He said he had already had a number of interesting offers from American business men, but had been disappointed that no British interests had come forward. I arranged for Mieville to put him in touch with Shone since I pointed out that I was not here to look after British interests myself.

## SECTION III : END OF AN ERA

## A. PREPARING FOR THE TRANSFER OF POWER

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-First Meeting May 12, 1947*

### ITEM 1. THE CHOICE BY PROVINCES OF THEIR OWN FUTURE

His Excellency the Viceroy said that whereas all the Indian parties seemed to have reasonable faith in the honesty and straight-forwardness of himself and his staff, there appeared to be a unanimous phobia amongst them about any document issuing from London, in which they expected and looked for, crookedness and catches. Therefore, reframing of the Draft Announcement in a way to make it acceptable to Congress would have to be done by his own staff in India.

**The Punjab**

Mr. Scott said that he was very much opposed to the separate procedure which had been suggested by the meeting the previous day for Gurdaspur. He felt that any departure from the principle of clearly defining the notional boundary between

Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas would lead to a spate of demands for other departures.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he did not intend to incorporate the suggestion for Gurdaspur made the previous day. Instead the Boundary Commission would be instructed to arrange for the handover from one side to the other of any area within border districts where there was clearly a majority of the opposite community.

**Bengal**

After discussion, His Excellency the Viceroy decided that the plan should be redrafted on the basis of no option for independence being given to Bengal or any other Province. It would, he pointed out, always be possible to reconsider this decision at any time if there was an united request for independence.

**Baluchistan**

His Excellency the Viceroy: directed DPSV to draft for his approval a letter to Pandit Nehru asking for proposals on how to ascertain the will of the people of Baluchistan.

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**The Name of the Plan in the Draft Announcement**

His Excellency the Viceroy decided that this plan would in future be known by the name "Plan WE", as under it we (the British) would be responsible for carrying out the various processes.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Thirty-Third Meeting May 16, 1947*

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ITEM 7. HEADS OF AGREEMENT

Attached as Annex "A" to these Minutes is a draft, "Heads of Agreement" which was prepared by Rao Bahadur Menon and to which it was hoped to obtain the signatures of the Indian Leaders.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, at his meeting the previous day, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had refused to sign this document. They had appeared absolutely to accept the plan but had not been willing to state their agreement in writing. Pandit Nehru had pointed out to him that Mr. Jinnah's success in life arose from never agreeing to anything. The Congress leaders had pointed out that they were making great concessions in order to get a final decision. His Excellency the Viceroy said that the crux of the matter appeared to be the form of the letter which Mr. Jinnah was going to write. He was going to discuss that with him that afternoon. He then dictated a draft of the form which he considered that this letter should take.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that he had seen Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel that morning. The Maharaja of Patiala was lunching with Sardar Patel that day. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had accepted the position in respect of the "Heads of Agreement", but they had pointed out that there would be trouble if the Muslim League rejected the plan, or accepted it only as an interim arrangement. They had stressed that this must be the Muslim League's last territorial demand. It would satisfy Congress if Mr. Jinnah accepted the announcement and used his good offices to put it into effect.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had already cautiously tried out threatening Mr. Jinnah that, unless he met require-

ments adequately, power would be demitted to the Interim Government on a Dominion status basis. Mr. Jinnah had taken this very calmly and said that he could not stop such a step in any event. His Excellency the Viceroy said that this abnormal reaction, which was typical of Mr. Jinnah who might derive great satisfaction by going down in history as a martyr for his cause, butchered by the British on the Congress altar. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he would probably not face up Mr. Jinnah finally to the alternative until after the first day of the meeting with the Indian Leaders.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Forty-Fifth Meeting June 17, 1947*

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ITEM 5. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (VCP 76)

The Meeting considered a paper, prepared by the Reforms Commissioner which proposed that, after the first week in July, the Central Government should operate in two separate compartments. It was suggested that the Congress and Muslim League Leaders, who were likely to be Prime Ministers in their respective Dominions after August 15, should be asked to nominate a Cabinet in respect of their respective parties; that all the members of each prospective Cabinet should have equal status and be equally entitled to participate in Meetings of the Council, but that the Muslim League Members should be concerned so far as normal administration was concerned only with the Pakistan areas.

Lord Ismay said that he did not believe that the Muslim League Ministers would welcome these proposals. He personally did not see the necessity for altering the present set-up so far before August 15.

Mr. Abell said that he also did not believe that the Muslim League would welcome the proposals. He considered that the administrative aspect of partition should be left to the Steering Committee and the other bodies which had been particularly set up for this purpose. Then the political aspect of these proposals alone remained. Did Congress really attach sufficient importance to them to justify the dislocation and the dissatisfaction among the Muslim League members that they were bound to cause?

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had no doubt whatsoever that Congress attached the very greatest importance to these proposals. On this subject there was no holding Pandit Nehru, who continually threatened resignation unless the Executive Council was reorganised. His Excellency said that he believed that he personally would be able to convince Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan of the desirability of these proposals, because the chief concern of the latter, who had, on his own confession, lost interest in the Finance Department and the Cabinet, was to find and train sufficient Muslim administrators. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan might well be induced to accept these proposals if he was given absolute authority to safeguard the position of Pakistan. There would not be much legislative action during the last six weeks before the transfer of power. The efforts of all the Ministers would be directed almost exclusively towards the problems of Partition. He asked whether it would be possible to modify these proposals to the extent that the Muslim League Ministers would continue nominally to hold, until the transfer of power, the portfolios which they now held. Rao Bahadur Menon said that this suggestion had been turned down by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 10 June 28, 1947**

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12. We had the last Meeting of the Partition Committee on June 26 and it was highly acrimonious. When Liaquat asked that one of the six Government printing presses should be moved from Delhi to Karachi, as they only had one small press there which was not sufficient for the Provincial Government's needs and could not possibly handle the Pakistan Government's requirements, Patel flared up. He said that all six presses were fully occupied with Government of India work and could not be spared. When I appealed to him to release at least one press to Pakistan, even if it meant inconvenience to the new government of India, he flared up again and said, "No one asked Pakistan to secede. We do not mind their taking their property with them but we have no intention of allowing them to injure the work of the Government of the rest of India merely because they have not sufficient resources of their own." I told Patel that I thought that this was shocking spirit in which to start partition, and Liaquat remarked that if that spirit persisted there would be no possible hope of the Pakistan Government being ready to take over on August 15.

13. It was decided that the Partition Committee should be turned into the "Partition Council" at the next meeting, which was held on June 27. It was agreed that the Partition Council should consist of any two of three members nominated by each side and thus Jinnah was able to attend this meeting. By means of private discussion with Patel I was able to move him to agree to Pakistan having the use of one of the six Government presses forthwith, provided it was not moved, and that this press should continue to work for them until a new press had been bought and set up in Karachi. I undertook to send a telegram home urging

that the highest possible priority should be given to the purchase of the necessary press and sending it to Karachi forthwith, since Congress are unwilling to allow their press to work one unnecessary day for Pakistan. Congress also want another press. I might add that this amicable solution was not obtained without a lot of hard work on my part.

**14.** The biggest crisis with which I have been faced however has been the reconstruction of the Interim Government. As there are only seven weeks left before partition I had hoped that all parties would be content to continue working with the present Interim Government under the standstill arrangements to which all parties had agreed. But it appears that Nehru, who is becoming more and more temperamental through overwork, protested that this would be a breach of faith in that I had agreed to obtain His Majesty's Government's consent to giving the Congress Party complete control and adequate safeguards for Pakistan areas. He apparently informed his Working Committee that he would resign forthwith unless this arrangement were honoured, and there was a danger of other Congress leaders following his example and my being left without a responsible Congress Government.

**15.** In the case of Bengal, which was about to be partitioned, Jinnah had refused to allow Regional Ministries or a Coalition Ministry to be formed, but had agreed that West Bengal should be allowed to have Ministers without portfolio who could hold a watching brief over the League Ministry and see that they did nothing to harm West Bengal. I pointed out to Jinnah that if he considered that the interest of West Bengal were adequately looked after by this proposal, then I considered he should accept a similar poroposal for the whole of India. The proposal I put up was that I should call for the resignation of all members of the Cabinet and then invite the leaders of both parties to nominate

nine members each to form two Committees of the Cabinet. The Union of India members would each take two of the eighteen actual portfolios, but should confine their activities to the area which would belong to the Union of India after August 15. The League Members would be given only "Pakistan portfolios" and would be responsible for looking after the interests of Pakistan areas for the remaining six or seven weeks. They would be shown all papers and would have the right of veto, as well as the right of asking for action to be teken.

16. In the event of a corresponding Pakistan and Union of India member disagreeing, the matter would be brought to the full Cabinet of eighteen members. There would be parity in the Cabinet and I would give a decision as to whether the matter affected the interests of one or other of the future Dominions, and action would be taken accordingly. In any case everyone is so busy on partition that practically all other action is at a standstill.

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26. I have had some difficult meetings, particularly one with the leaders on June 13, about the position of the Indian States. Nehru pursued the traditional Congress Party line that any Indian successor Government is entitled to assume paramountcy after the transfer of power and strongly denying the right of States to declare their independence. He attacked the Political Adviser, Sir Conrad Corfield, to his face and said he ought to be tried for misfeasance. In fact, as usual he completely lost control of himself. Jinnah, of course, took the opposite point of view that Indian States were Sovereign States for every purpose, except in so far as they had entered into treaties with the Crown. After a long and acrimonious discussion all agreed that the Government of India should set up a new department, to be called the "State Department", to deal with matters of common concern with the States; in fact that it should take over every-

thing not connected with paramountcy from the present Political Department.

27. I am glad to say that Nehru has not been put in charge of the new States Department, which would have wrecked everything. Patel, who is essentially a realist and very sensible, is going to take it over in consultation with Nishtar. Even better news is that V.P. Menon is to be the Secretary. By this means, I think we shall avoid a really bad break with the States with all the endless repercussions that this would have entailed.

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29. On the subject of the States, Nehru and Gandhi are pathological. Nehru said he must go to Kashmir to get his friend Sheikh Abdullah (the President of the States National Conference) out of prison and to support the Freedom movement in the State. Gandhi came to see me and suggested that he should go to Kashmir to prepare the way for Nehru. Finally I told them I had an invitation from the Maharaja, who is an old friend, and that I would greatly prefer that they should let me go and have some discussions with the Maharaja and the Prime Minister before they tried their hand. They were both very anxious that he should make no declaration of independence and should, in fact, indicate a willingness to join the Constituent Assembly.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fortieth Meeting June 9, 1947*

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ITEM 2. DOMINION STATUS

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he felt that it was essential for the Legislation, which was going to be introduced

amending the Government of India Act to confer Dominion status upon Hindustan and Pakistan, to include provision for the two Dominions to have the same man as Governor-General, at any rate in the initial stages. It would have to be made clear that only an interim period was envisaged, and that this could be brought to an end on the wish of either party. He was equally sure that in this matter his name should in no way be mentioned. A decision on whether Mr. Jinnah was willing to have the same man as Governor-General of Pakistan as Governor-General of Hindustan would have to be made within a month for planning purposes. His Excellency said that, after careful consideration, he had come to the conclusion that it would not be possible for him to stay as Governor-General of only one of the two Dominions; but it would be quite fatal for Mr. Jinnah to know that he had taken this decision.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, if it was to be assumed that his present staff was indisputably essential if the processes of partition were to be completed within a year or two, it would be necessary to work in the interests of India, regardless of personal interests, in order to bring these processes to a successful conclusion.

Sir Eric Mieville said that he was not sure that it was fully realised exactly what the powers of a Governor-General under Dominion status were. These had been defined by the Imperial Conference which had taken place in 1926. He read an extract from the decision there reached, which made it clear that a Constitutional Governor-General could not communicate with HMG. Sri Eric Mieville said that the staff of the normal Constitutional Governor-General, of a Dominion, was extremely small compared with the Viceroy's present staff. Normally the staffs of Constitutional Governors-General were paid by the Dominions concerned. The biggest, he believed, was in Canada where the Governor-General had one Secretary, a Comptroller, and four ADCs.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that he agreed that, so far as communications with HMG were concerned, the Governor-General would after the transfer of power have no official position. Nevertheless there could still be a channel of personal correspondence. He emphasized his belief that in the initial stages the influence of the Governor-General would be very great indeed.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that the Duke of Gloucester, when Governor-General of Australia, had had a very much bigger staff than that quoted by Sir Eric Mieville for Canada—including a Major-General as Chief of Staff. He said that he had already spoken to the Prime Minister about this matter. He had explained to him that, if he was asked to stay on, the basic reason for this request would be because, as a manoeuvre to separate warring people, and in view of the fact that the emotional position had become untenable, Dominion status had been rushed through in two or three months, whereas normally it would have taken two or three years to introduce. The process of partition would nevertheless have to go on. His Excellency said that he had explained to Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel that there would be only a Constitutional Governor-General after the introduction of Dominion status. But Pandit Nehru had replied that the holder of this particular appointment would be in a very different position to a normal Constitutional Governor-General; and that, in the initial stages, at least, his influence would count for a great deal. Pandit Nehru had further expressed doubt whether the processes of partition would work satisfactorily if His Excellency did not stay personally. The Viceroy went on to say that he had told Mr. Attlee that, in the event of his remaining as Constitutional Governor-General, he would clearly not want as big a staff as he had at present; but he would require a team of high level experts if he was to be required to give advice and guidance, to act as a mediator, and to bring the two sides together.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that, as he saw it, in the present

situation both sides went to Great Britain for a decision. The next step would be for them both to go to a British representative for friendly advice. They would wish to use His Excellency's good offices for this purpose. There was also the problem of the States to be considered. Here an independent adviser and guide would be of the greatest benefit. Even Mr. Gandhi had said that he would be entirely guided by the decisions of any Committee of which Lord Ismay, for example, was Chairman.

Lord Ismay gave his opinion that, if it was decided to have two separate Governors-General, all the work of His Excellency and his present high-level staff would be finished. But, if the Viceroy remained as Governor-General of both Dominions, the only reason for this would be so that he could help with advice. The two Dominions would probably invest him, through goodwill, with great power in an influential and advisory capacity. He and his high-level staff would, of course, do nothing executive. If the two Dominions rejected the advice given continually the position would probably become untenable.

The Viceroy pointed out that Pakistan would be the Dominion which would gain most advantages if he stayed behind as Governor-General of both Dominions. In fact, if he had his own separate Governor-General, Mr. Jinnah might well wreck his prospects.

Mr. Scott said that he thought that it was important that the two new Dominions should not get into the frame of mind wherein they would always look to the Governor-General for a decision. Rao Bahadur Menon said that there was no question of this. All they would want would be His Excellency's good offices in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Scott gave his opinion that the Governor-General should not be Chairman of any Committee with executive or political responsibility after the date of the transfer of power. His Excellency said that he agreed that it would be out of the question for him to take the Chair at meetings of either side

separately. But it was necessary to dismiss precedent in these matters altogether. If he personally was the only man holding office in both Dominions, it might well be possible for him to take the Chair at meetings between them, without a vote and only in order to guide the discussions.

Sir Eric Mieville emphasised the necessity for putting the whole onus of the decision to use the good offices of a Constitutional Governor-General in any special way onto the Indians themselves. Rao Bahadur Menon said that the necessary legislation could be so drafted to give this effect. Lord Ismay suggested that the next step should be the issue of an agreed statement by the two parties.

Rao Bahadur Menon emphasised that special provision would definitely be necessary in the legislation for one Governor-General to serve both Dominions. This was not possible, for example, in Australia and New Zealand at present.

Mr. Christie suggested that His Excellency might be Chairman of a Committee consisting of representatives of both Dominions in the capacity of a Minister of State. The Viceroy said that this would be most undesirable and Rao Bahadur Menon stated that it would be unacceptable.

The Viceroy said that Sir Walter Monckton should be asked to interview Mr. Jinnah concerning the latter's choice of a Governor-General, and to point out to him the advantages for the initial period of sharing one with Hindustan.

Mr. Campbell-Johnson drew attention to a report in a newspaper from London to the effect that a Government spokesman had said that it was hoped in Whitehall that it might be possible for Lord Mountbatten to remain as Governor-General for the whole of India.

His Excellency the Viceroy:

(i) directed Press Attache to point out to Mr. Joyce* the undesirability of such statements by Government spokesmen being made at the present time;

(ii) invited CVS to arrange for a paper to be prepared setting out the advantages of Pakistan and Hindustan having the same man as Governor-General;

(iii) invited CVS to prepare, for his approval, a brief for Sir Walter Monckton's meeting with Mr. Jinnah;

(iv) invited CVS to consider what the next step in this matter should be if Sir Walter Monckton's interview with Mr. Jinnah was unsuccessful, bearing in mind that it was essential to have Mr. Jinnah's decision within a month, for planning purposes.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Forty-First Meeting June 10, 1947*

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ITEM 2. DOMINION STATUS

His Excellency the Viceroy recalled that he had suggested at the Staff Meeting the previous day, that Sir Walter Monckton should be asked to interview Mr. Jinnah concerning the latter's choice of a Governor-General.

There was before the meeting a brief from Lord Ismay on this subject, which made the alternative suggestion that a member of the Viceroy's staff should be the person to see Mr. Jinnah. The Viceroy stated that he considered that this would indeed be the better course; both Lord Ismay and Sir Eric Mieville should go and see Mr. Jinnah in a few days time to find out his intentions. They should see Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan first and should also

*Alec Houghton Joyce, Principal Information Officer to the Cabinet Mission to India, 1946.

brief Sir Walter Monckton on the matter in case he went and saw Mr. Jinnah and it was raised in the course of conversation.

A draft, prepared by Rao Bahadur Menon, of the legislation required to enable both Dominions to have the same man as Governor-General, was then handed round. His Excellency the Viceroy said that this draft might serve as a basis for discussion with Mr. Jinnah; but he considered that it would not be desirable eventually to include it in the legislation.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that after the transfer of power (assuming that he remained as Govenor-General of both Dominions), Viceregal Lodge, Simla, might be considered as a neutral territory. In any event there would have to be a convention whereby any Ministers of one State were enabled to come and see him in the other at any time. There would have to be a provision in the Act which was being drafted which would make it clear that the Headquarters of the Governor-General were wherever he was residing at any specific moment.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, (still assuming that both the two new Dominions asked him to stay on as Governor-General), he would have to find out from the two Prime Ministers what were their wishes regarding his staff. He realised that it would be desirable for many members of his staff after the date of transfer of power to be Indians; but felt that it would be necessary, in view of the fact that the supply of competent Indian administrators generally would be unlikely to meet the demand, that certain of the more important positions should be held by the British.

Sir Eric Mieville stated that the Governor-General of Canada had honorary ADCs mostly with the rank of Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel, in many of the big cities in Canada. His Excellency said that a similar system might work well in India.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that he did not believe that the Congress leaders would object to any staff which His Excellency selected. Furthermore, Sardar Patel had agreed that the existing

expenditure should continue to be charged to the revenues of the future Dominion.

His Excellency said that he felt that it would be particularly difficult for him to conduct delicate negotiations if he did not have Lord Ismay and Sir Eric Mieville available to help, particularly by going to see the various political leaders. He explained that Mr. Attlee had given an undertaking that HMG would pay for the special staff which he had brought out with him until June 1948.

Rao Bahadur Menon drew attention to the danger, if the special staff remained behind after the transfer of power, of socialist propaganda being started to the effect that the British had not withdrawn at all but intended to remain indefinitely in India. His Excellency the Viceroy said that the position would have to be made quite clear in a statement. The temporary nature of any additional appointments would have to be stressed and it would have to be made clear that it was with the agreement of the Indian Leaders that the special staff was remaining.

Sir Eric Mieville said that he felt that the withdrawal of British troops would be taken by many in India as a symbol of the withdrawal of the British rule. Lord Ismay said that he had written to Field Marshal Auchinleck asking him for a new plan for the withdrawal of British troops. He felt that an announcement on this should be made as early as possible. The Viceroy asked Lord Ismay to stress the urgency of reaching a decision to Field Marshal Auchinleck. He said that he himself would see Field Marshal Auchinleck concerning this matter and the plan for the division of the Indian Armed Forces which the latter had prepared.

His Excellency said that he believed that there was considerable confusion in Pandit Nehru's mind concerning the date June 1948. Pandit Nehru was working at great pressure to get the new Constitution ready before that date, and had emphasised that this was his object to such an extent that he might do

himself irreparable damage if he did not succeed in it. His Excellency pointed out that the date of June 1948 now had no significance whatsoever. This point should be stressed in background information given to the Press.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that a matter upon which a decision would shortly have to be taken was whether it was to be stated that the Provinces which were to make up Pakistan were seceding from India, or whether India was going to be divided into two. Pandit Nehru had throughout emphasised to him that the only basis on which he would ever agree to the formation of Pakistan was that, by means of a variation of the Cabinet Mission plan, certain Provinces had been allowed to opt out. Pandit Nehru had always stressed the continuity of India as such. The Viceroy said that he had tried to impress on Mr. Jinnah the point that, if the latter obtained his sovereign independent State and extracted the assets to which he was entitled, he should be satisfied. He would do his best to make Mr. Jinnah see the point that it was not worth fighting Congress on this issue. All ambassadors appointed by Pandit Nehru would presumably continue in their appointments. The ambassadors already appointed by various countries to India would presumably look after the interests of both successor authorities. Sir Terence Shone was asking for a second High Commissioner, for Pakistan.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that, to his mind, Pakistan was breaking away from India. He did dot see that they stood to lose anything by starting afresh. In any event it was impossible to prevent Congress using the word "India" for their Dominion if they wanted to.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that, as he saw it, it would be upto Pakistan to apply for membership of UNO.

Mr. Scott said that, in his view, all international obligations would be succeeded to by both States.

Lord Ismay said that this issue was not really for us to

decide. It had been referred to the Secretay of State, who had now stated that the Foreign Office were being consulted urgently; Lord Ismay added his view that the word "decession" was highly derogatory.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Forty-Sixth Meeting June 23, 1947*

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ITEM 5. GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Rao Bahadur Menon pointed out that it was apparent from the Draft Bill that the India Office were assuming that His Excellency would be asked by both parties to become Governor-General of each of the two new Dominions which were going to be set up. It appeared that the India Office were expecting both Mr. Jinnah and Pandit Nehru to write letters to His Excellency asking him to accept this post; and that it would be possible to quote these letters in Parliament. He gave his opinion that it would be essential to obtain such a letter from Mr. Jinnah before July 5, if the Legislation was to remain in its present form.

His Excellency pointed out that, in the present wording of the proviso in the Draft Bill, one of the three parties (consisting of himself, Pandit Nehru and Mr. Jinnah) would have to take active steps. It was possible that Mr. Jinnah would do nothing active. One course, in such circumstances, would be for him (His Excellency) publicly to state that he would be prepared to resign whenever either Mr. Jinnah or Pandit Nehru asked him to.

His Excellency said that he had not as yet finally decided how to handle Mr. Jinnah on this issue. He might, if favourable opportunity offered, broach the subject that evening. He might ask Mr. Jinnah to give a definitive answer in, say, three days' time. He might offer to make a member of his staff available to

Mr. Jinnah clearly to point out the advantages and disadvantages of himself remaining as Governor-General of both Dominions for the initial period.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meeting*
*Fifty-Second Meeting July 4, 1947*

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ITEM 2. GOVERNOR-GENERAL

The Meeting considered a paper prepared by the Conference Secretary, putting forward the reasons, as brought out in an unrecorded discussion the previous day, why His Excellency should accept the appointment of Governor-General of the new Dominion of India alone. This question had arisen because of Mr. Jinnah's intention, first declared two days previously, to put forward his own name for the post of Governor-General of Pakistan.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that his conscience was clear that he had taken every possible step of which he knew, in order to put clearly before Mr. Jinnah the advantages of Pakistan having the same Governor-General as India during at least the initial period after the transfer of power. The final step which he had taken had been to send for the Nawab of Bhopal and ask him again to point out the advantages to Mr. Jinnah. This step had been unsuccessful. His Excellency said that to him the most painful part of all this was that he had, though unintentionally, deceived Congress. They had made their offer that he should remain as Governor-General of the Dominion of India on the understanding that he would be Governor-General of Pakistan also. His Excellency emphasised that Mr. Jinnah's decision had come as a complete surprise to him. For example, Mr. Jinnah had not told the Nawab of Bhopal, when he had seen him four days previously that was in his mind.

The Viceroy stated that the Nawab of Bhopal had given his opinion that the only hope for Pakistan now was for him (His Excellency) to stay on as Governor-General of India. The Nawab of Bhopal had said that he considered that this was the only hope for the States too. He had added that from the personal viewpoint he thought that the decision was much more difficult and had suggested that three days would be required in order to make it.

Rao Bahadur Menon stated that Mr. Mohammad Ali had told him that informed Muslim League opinion shared the Nawab of Bhopal's view that it would be in the interests of Pakistan for His Excellency to remain as Governor-General of India.

A separate part of the paper before the Meeting dealt with the question as to whether, in the light of Mr. Jinnah's decision, it would be desirable to amend the proviso to the Indian Independence Bill which allowed the same person to be Governor-General of both Dominions. His Excellency decided that it would be best to leave this proviso as it stood.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fifty-Third Meeting July 7, 1947*

The Viceroy stated that one of the main reasons why His Excellency had expressed an opinion opposed to the suggestion that he should remain as Governor-General of the Dominion of India was that his whole staff had, three or four weeks previously, agreed that it would be unthinkable for him to stay on with one Dominion only. He said that it had been a great surprise to him when his staff, with the exception of Captain Brockman, had unanimously advised him that he should stay on. He still felt that, if he did so, there was a very real chance that he would be accused of acting dishonourably.

Colonel Currie* said that he held the same opinion in this matter as the majority of the rest of the staff. He considered that the implications of His Excellency leaving had not been fully realised before—and that these implications were likely to be very serious. Practically in effect, they might be disastrous.

Sir Eric Mieville suggested that the main reason why the staff had, three or four weeks previously, advised against His Excellency remaining as Governor-General of one Dominion only was because they felt it likely that, in such circumstances, his usefulness would in the main disappear after the transfer of power, and that he would not be able take the Chair at the partition and at the Joint Defence Council. All that, however, was now completely changed because of Mr. Jinnah's attitude. His Excellency confirmed that Mr. Jinnah, at his interview two days previously, had been at great pains to emphasise what a great help to Pakistan it would be if he (His Excellency) stayed on in any capacity. Mr. Jinnah had also at that interview agreed to His Excellency acting as Chairman of the Joint Defence Council. Mr. Jinnah had stated that nobody would question His Excellency's impartiality—such a thought would not enter the minds of members of the Muslim League.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that Congress opinion was unanimous that His Excellency was the only person who could possibly help them to tide over the difficulties which were bound to arise during the next six months or year, this applied particularly to difficulties in connection with the States.

Later in the meeting, Field Marshal Auchinleck gave his opinion that there might be adverse Muslim comment to His Excellency staying on as Governor-General of India only. This might be circumvented by a public statement by Mr. Jinnah. Field Marshal Auchinleck gave his view that His Excellency must stay on in one capacity or another. He said that he did not

*Colonel D. H. Currie, Military Secretary to the Viceroy (MSV).

think he and other senior officers would be able to carry on without His Excellency's guidance and support.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fifty-Fifth Meeting July 9, 1947*

## ITEM. 1. GOVERNORS-GENERAL

The Meeting considered two telegrams which had been received that morning from the Prime Minister. The following was an extract from the first:

"I would ask you most earnestly to accept the Governor-Generalship of India during this period of transition."

The second contained the draft of a statement on the nominations of Governors-General for India and Pakistan, which the Prime Minister intended to make the following day in the House of Commons.

A draft reply to the Prime Minister, which had been prepared at a meeting of members of the staff earlier that day, was handed round.

His Excellency stated that he had finally decided to accept the Governor-Generalship of the Dominion of India alone during the period of transition. He wished it now to be put on record, though for the last time, that he was still most uneasy and unhappy about this decision. He considered, however, that, in view of the over-powering advice which he had received from London, he was choosing the lesser of two evils. He felt it had been essential to send Lord Ismay home, because HMG had, in a way, been misled.

His Excellency stated he had that morning shown Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel the draft statement which the Prime Minister intended to make. They could not have been more charming, and had made no criticism—in fact they had thought it admirable. He had told them that he considered that he was

under an obligation to them to stay on and had only asked them to facilitate making clear the fact of his impartiality. They had replied that no one would imagine that he was being partial. They had further agreed to reference, in the Prime Minister's speech, to the Muslim League's approval of his appointment.

His Excellency stated that the Congress leaders had said that they wanted him to stay on as long he would, but he had insisted on retention of the formula "at all events for the transition period" because this meant that it would be possible to select, nearer the time, the date on which it would be possible to depart with honour. They had accepted this formula.

## ITEM 2. THE PRINCELY STATES

Rao Bahadur Menon and Mr. Sundaram put forward the suggestion, which had originally been made by Sir George Spence* that the proviso to Clause 7 of the Indian Independence Bill should be amended to include agreements other than only those which related to customs, transit and communication, posts and telegraphs, or other like matters.

Sir Conrad Corfield said that he would have had no objection to such an amendment if it had been incorporated in the Bill before issue. However, to make the amendment now would be likely to cause suspicion and lead to difficulties.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that at his interview, just before the present meeting, with Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, they had asked him what he was going to do to help India in connection with her most pressing difficulty—relations with the States. He had replied that he had already started to help in this matter and would now make the cause of agreement his primary consideration. He had said that he wished to pay tribute

*Sir George Hemming Spence, ICS, Secretary, Government of India, Legislative Department, from 1935.

to Pandit Nehru for having agreed that States need only join the Centre on the three main central subjects; and to Sardar Patel for the statement which the latter had issued three days previously. He had said that, if the task could be tackled on that basis, he would throw himself heart and soul into the cause of obtaining agreement. He had made the point that, in meeting with representatives of the States, it would be desirable for him to see the States' representatives, alone first, accompanied only by his own staff. He would then have discussion with the States Department, and if necessary also Pandit Nehru, unilaterally. He would then hold further meetings with each side to narrow down the points of disagreement; and it was only when he was confident that agreement would be reached that he would bring the parties together. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had agreed to this proposal.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 11 July 5, 1947**

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**21**. The main object of Ismay's visit to Nehru is to lay before the Prime Minister and Cabinet Committee the very difficult position in which I now find myself in connection with the question of a common Governor-General. It will be remembered that I reported to the Cabinet Committee that Nehru had put in writing a request to me to remain on as the Governor-General of India. As Jinnah had consistently impressed on me the absolute need for me to remain until the process of partition was completed I managed (not without difficulty) to persuade Congress to agree that I must also be allowed to accept a similar offer from Pakistan so that I could impartially look after the interests of both dominions during the period of partition.

**22**. Before I went to London Jinnah said that although he

thought two Governors-General would be better than one, he asked me specifically to stay on as a Super Governor-General over the other two. From that day to this he has repeatedly impressed on myself and my staff the need for us all to stay and see the partition through fairly; and we have all consistently told him that this can only be satisfactorily done by myself as a common Governor-General and that fortunately for him Congress had already agreed to this system.

23. For the last three weeks we have been trying to get an answer out of Jinnah and he has always put off an answer, and finally said he could not let me know until he had seen the bill. After he had seen the bill, he still did not wish to answer until he had consulted two of his leaders who were away at the two Referendums. However, he finally came "to seek my advice as to what he should do". He began by saying that he wished to have British Governors in every province of Pakistan except Sind which, since it would be under his personal observation in Karachi, could have a Muslim Governor. He pointed out that he had already agreed to the three heads of the Pakistan Defence Services being British; but remarked that the only way in which he could sell the idea of all these British high officials to the inhabitants of Pakistan would be if he himself became the Governor-General.

24. He said he had been unwilling to take this step but had been urged to do so by three or four intimate friends and colleagues whom he consulted. As the Nawab of Bhopal is his principal friend and adviser and had told me three days previously that Jinnah had specifically consulted him on this point, and that Bhopal had told him that he thought that he would be mad to reject the chance of having a common Governor-General with a British team to see partition through till March 31, 1948 (which has been taken as the end of the partition period) and as it is

quite clear that Liaquat Ali Khan strongly shares this view, I am afraid that the only adviser that Jinnah listens to is Jinnah.

25. *He is suffering from megalomania in its worst form* for when I pointed out to him that if he went as a Constitutional Governor-General his powers would be restricted but as Prime Minister he really could run Pakistan, he made no bones about the fact that his Prime Minister would do what he said. "*In my position it is I who will give the advice and others will act on it.*"

26. I then conceived the idea of putting a clause in the bill to have an officiating Governor-General in Pakistan whenever the Governor-General was not in the territories of that dominion. I got this passed by Congress at their meeting about the bill and then went in to see the Muslim League representatives at their corresponding meeting.

27. By a fortunate coincidence Mr. Jinnah immediately on my appearing attacked me on the question of sanctions against the Union of India if they failed to comply with awards of the Arbirtral Tribunal and hand over to Pakistan their fair share of assets. For, as he pointed out, nearly all the common assets happened to be situated in the Union of India's territory. This gave me a good opportunity of saying in the presence of Jinnah's henchmen that the provision which had been devised to safeguard Pakistan's interests in partition had been the system of a common Governor-General with a high class British staff whom both sides would trust to see fair play.

28. I pointed out that Congress had agreed to this system, had nominated me, and that I and my British staff were willing to serve until the end of the partition period of March 31. I said I quite appreciated that most of the partition work would go on in Delhi, and that I should have very little time to spare for

Karachi. I had therefore got Congress to agree that an officiating Governor-General should be appointed during those 7½ months and that I would only visit Pakistan territory by mutual arrangement with its officiating Governor-General.

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30. Jinnah solemnly assured me that he realised all the disadvantages of giving up the common Governor-General, that his one ambition was that I should stay as Viceroy or overall Governor-General to see the partition through, but he was unable to accept any position other than that of Governor-General of Pakistan on August 1.

31. I asked him, "Do you realise what this will cost you?" He said sadly, "It may cost me several crores of rupees in assets," to which I replied somewhat acidly, "It may well cost you the whole of your assets and the future of Pakistan." I then got up and left the room.

32. Mohammad Ali, the Secretary of the meeting, lunched with my PSV (George Abell) afterwards, and said the meeting had spent the next hour discussing my bombshell, but they had been quite unable to shake Jinnah. Liaquat Ali Khan came to see me after lunch, and begged me to stay on as an overall Governor-General which he said Jinnah would accept, but that I could not expect Jinnah, having achieved his supreme desire of Pakistan, to give up being its first Governor-General. "Not even if it means that he will be its last?" I asked Liaquat. He shrugged his shoulders and said sadly, "We must do our best but whatever happens I hope that you will stay on with India for otherwise there will be terrible trouble and Pakistan will suffer severely." Jinnah also curiously enough begged me to remain as the Governor-General of India since he said that unless there were

a steadying influence he was afraid of what the Congress Government might do to Pakistan.

33. I am now in a complete quandary. I have always held the view that I should stay on with both sides or with neither of them. I never dreamt that both sides would ask me to stay with one side.

34. My own inclination is to go, for I have always felt and said that I considered it morally wrong to stay on with only one of the two sides. But unfortunately I fear that I have unintentionally led Nehru and all the Congress leaders up the garden path and that they will never forgive me for allowing Jinnah once more to have his way. I therefore feel that this is a matter on which I require higher guidance, and have considered it essential to send Ismay home to seek it.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 12 July 12, 1947**

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20. Now that advice has been so unanimous and strong that I should accept the Governor-Generalship of India and the Chairmanship of the joint Defence Council, my mind is fully made up and I shall carry on and do my very best. I must however record the feeling which I cannot altogether dismiss that it is a tragedy that I have had to take a position with one side when hitherto I have managed to retain my complete impartiality. I must also point out that this will be an extremely difficult position for Congress leaders to put over on their back-benchers; for Jinnah scores an undoubted victory over Congress from a psychological point of view in having an Indian Governor-General for Pakistan.

21. The one bull point in the favour of the Congress leaders is that by my continuing as Governor-General the continuing entity of India as opposed to Pakistan is more firmly established in the eyes of the world The second is that I have only accepted for the "transition" period—probably about eight months—so that it cannot be looked upon as establishing permanent inequality between the two Dominions.

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29. Finally, I tackled the most difficult problem of all, the accession, or as I put it the "adherence", of Hyderabad to the Dominion of India. Up to now the States have all felt that the Dominion of India Government would insist on complete adherence for all the central subjects, which. would virtually mean giving up internal autonomy. But both Nehru and Patel have made the most realistic gesture in authorising me to negotiate on the basis of the three original Central subjects in the Cabinet Misson plan—Defence, External Affairs and Communications.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Fifth Meeting July 28,1947*

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## ITEM 6. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE DOMINION OF INDIA

Rao Bahadur Menon said that he was concerned about the way things were going in connection with the selection of Ministers for the Government of the future Dominion of India. He had hoped that this would be a Ministry of talents; possibly including a number of young men. However, it appeared that Pandit Nehru was having great difficulty in forgetting his loyalties; and names such as those of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

had been mentioned. Rao Bahadur Menon gave his opinion that Rajkumari Amrit Kaur did not possess the necessary capacity. He said that he understood that it was also intended to retain Mr. Rajagopalachari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Sardar Baldev Singh.

The Viceroy gave his opinion that the four outstanding members of the present Government of India were Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Dr. Matthai* and Mr. Bhabha†. It would be a great tragedy if the latter two were dropped However, Mr. Bhabha himself had said that he might not be prepared to stay on because of the inefficiency of his colleagues. The Viceroy said that, if Congress made a mistake in this matter, it was probable that they would not survive.

With this Rao Bahadur Menon agreed. He said that he had pointed out to Sardar Patel that, in such circumstances, many of the present Government servants would feel that they might be of more assistance outside the Government than in it.

His Excellency said that he intended to discuss this matter with Pandit Nehru at his next interview. He would point out that, although he would be a constitutional Governor-General and bound to accept whatever advice he was given in this matter, he trusted that he would first have an opportunity of discussing the proposed list. It was customary for a Governor-General to have this opportunity.

Rao Bahadur Menon emphasised the undesirability, of it becoming generally known that His Excellency was taking a hand in this matter. He also advised against His Excellency discussing it with Sardar Patel.

*Dr John Matthai, Member for Finance, Interim Government and for Industries and Supplies, 1946.

†C. H. Bhabha, Member for Commerce, in the Interim Government, and for works, mines and power, 1946-47.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 15 August 2, 1947**

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36. Rumours in the press and private sources of information had indicated to me that Nehru was about to submit to me an unimaginative Cabinet of old-time Congressites. I was convinced that such a Cabinet would be disastrous. I therefore made a great point of discussing the composition of the new Cabinet with him. I began by admitting that as Constitutional Governor-General I would have to accept any names he put to me, but I hoped that as a friend he would allow me to give him some advice. He said that he would always look to me for advice in these matters.

37. I then said I had no idea who the new Members would be, but I was convinced that unless he got a really sound Cabinet in which young, talented and keen members predominated, he would lose a great opportunity of gripping the imagination of the country. I told him I thought his greatest weakness was his personal loyalty towards old friends and colleagues, and that unless he got rid of a lot of top-weight like Rajagopalachari and Maulana Azad, he would find himself greatly hampered. I told him I thought that Bhabha and Matthai should both be kept since they were extremely able and fearless. I told him that Baldev Singh appeared to me to be unsatisfactory as Defence Member though I realised he was the only available Sikh, that Rajendra Prasad was a dear old man, and ought to become the Speaker in the House, and that in general, it was essential that he should get a crowd of really good young men. With such a Cabinet the Congress could remain in power for the next few years; without it, it was done.

38. Nehru agreed in principle, but said that there was a remark-

able dearth of good young men, between the ages of 30 and 45, but that it was his intention to pick fairly unknown young men and put them in as Deputy Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries to get experience. I told him I thought that this was a serious matter for India, and I sincerely trusted that he would give it his closest personal attention.

39. Although Nehru listened attentively he gave no indication of what his reactions were and I felt that I had probably failed to convince him. I now hear that he went straight back and summoned a meeting of his Congress colleagues, at which he tore up the list of the Cabinet that they were proposing to submit to me and said that it was vital for the future of India that they should produce a more imaginative Cabinet and they should start thinking again. Sensation!!! Patel came down heavily on "my" side and they are now sitting night and day trying to produce a better Cabinet. I sincerely trust that they will succeed for otherwise I fear Congress really will be finished within a year.

## B. DELIMITATION OF BOUNDARIES

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 9 June 12, 1947**

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**20.** I was again asked by both sides to act as arbitrator but I pointed out how soon their confidence in me would be shaken in the present atmosphere. They therefore agreed that an Arbitral Tribunal should be set up at the same time as the Partition Council. It will consist of three members, all men of great judicial experience and the composition of it will be settled by the Partition Committee. It was agreed that Sardar Baldev Singh will consult the other Sikh leaders about the composition of the Arbitral Tribunal and will inform the Partition Committee of

their views. The services of the Arbitral Tribunal will be offered to the Provinces which are to be partitioned.

**21**. A decision has not yet been reached about the composition of the Boundary Commission, for which two suggestions have been put forward. These are:

(*a*) that each Commission should consist of three persons obtained through UNO *plus* three expert assessors from each side of each partition Province;

(*b*) that each Commission should consist of an independent Chairman and four other persons, of whom two should be nominated by Congress and two by the Muslim League.

**22**. Nehru pointed out that suggestion (a) above would involve considerable delay. The UNO Headquarters would probably have to communicate with each Member Government, and a long time would elapse before a choice could be made. Furthermore, it is possible that the ultimate choice might not be a very suitable one.

**23**. With regard to the second proposal, it has been suggested that the four persons nominated, two each by the Congress and the Muslim League, should be of high judicial standing. Possibly these four might elect their own Chairman for each Commission. If there was any difficulty about this, the two parties could perhaps themselves suggest names for the appointments of Chairman. I hope to take a decision on this matter at my meeting with the leaders on Friday, June 13.

**24**. I have already described the feeling in last week's Cabinet meeting. I must now add that the Cabinet held yesterday evening had promised to be an equally stormy one; for Liaquat had kindly warned me that he was going to oppose the proposal to set up a corporation in which private companies and the

Government would co-operate to exploit the forests of the Andaman Islands. His grounds for opposing this were that the Andamans were part of the over-all assets of India, still to be divided between Pakistan and the rest of India.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 9 June 12, 1947**

## ANNEX 1. LETTER FROM THE EARL OF LISTOWEL, TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

**Private and Top Secret** *India Office, Whitehall*
*June 13, 1947*

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2. On receiving your telegram No 1348-S of June 7 about the proposed Arbitral Tribunal, I at once approached the Lord Chancellor about a possible Chairman. It seems that, apart from any other consideration, the members of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council are all ruled out on account of age since 60 ought, I think, to be regarded as an absolute maximum and 55 would probably be the optimum age. As you doubtless realise, the pressure upon High Court Judges at the moment is very heavy and the Lord Chancellor can hold out no hope of one being made available for your purpose. An approach is, however, being made to Sir Cyril Radcliffe who would, I think, fill the bill admirably. Apart from his great legal abilities, he has just the right personality and acquired during the war administrative experience which would be likely to be of great assistance to him. Of course, he may well feel unable to leave the Bar, even temporarily, so soon after returning to it, however worthwhile your job can be made to appear, but there is just a possibility that he might be attracted by it.

(SD) EARL OF LISTOWEL

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 10 June 28, 1947**

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7. On June 20 the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly met and decided on the partition of Bengal. At the preliminary joint meeting it was decided by 126 votes to 90 that the Province, if it remained united, should join a new Constituent Assembly (i.e. Pakistan). At a separate meeting of the members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on the same day, it was decided by 58 votes to 21 that the Province should be partitioned and by the same majority that West Bengal should join the existing Constituent Assembly should partition eventuate. It was also decided, by 105 votes to 34, that in the events for partition East Bengal would agree to amalgamation with Sylhet.

8. The Punjab has also decided for partition. At the preliminary joint session of the two Assemblies held on June 23, 91 members voted for joining a new Constituent Assembly if there were no partition. The East Punjab Assembly meeting separately, voted against partition by 99 votes to 27, and by the same majority for joining a new Constituent Assembly.

9. As anticipated, the Sind Legislative Assembly at its special sitting on June 26, decided by 33 votes to 20 that Sind should join the new Pakistan Constituent Assembly. Thus we can now look upon the creation of Pakistan on August 15 as legally decided upon.

10. I have been discussing the Boundary Commissions of the Punjab and Bengal with the leaders including Baldev Singh, and I am glad to say that very simple terms of reference have now been agreed upon. They are as follows:

' *For the Punjab:* The Boundary Commission is instructed to

demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so it will also take into account other factors.

*For Bengal:* The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Bengal on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so it will also take into account other factors.

*For Sylhet:* In the event of the referendum in Sylhet district of Assam resulting in favour of amalgamation in Eastern Bengal the Boundary Commission for Bengal will also demarcate the Muslim majortiy areas of Sylhet district and contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts.

11. The Boundary Commissions are now being set up. Congress and the League having each nominated two representatives to each Commission. The question of the Chairman has been causing a lot of trouble. At the first meeting of the Partition Council held today Jinnah's proposal was accepted by Congress, namely that Sir Cyril Radcliffe should be appointed as the Chairman of both Boundary Commissions with a final casting vote, as this was considered to be the only way in which the boundaries could be definitely settled before August 15. Meanwhile the Boundary Commissions would start work at once and only what is in dispute would be laid before the Chairman.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 12 July 12, 1947**

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6. The partition work in Bengal is not going ahead very fast. The Congress are at present being quite co-operative but the main burden falls on the Muslim League, who have to set up a

new capitial at Dacca and to start a new administration. The resources of Dacca are small and the time available is very short. The Muslim League High Command themselves take a good deal less interest in East Bengal than in Western Pakistan and I am afraid East Bengal is at the bottom of the priority list. The attention of our Steering Committee here in Delhi has been drawn to the importance of giving certain priorities to Dacca and possibly things will improve. I am writing to Jinnah about all this.

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8. The Chairman of the two Boundary Commissions, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, has arrived and after staying with me for 48 hours to get into the picture, he left for a preliminary visit to Calcutta. Nehru, Jinnah and the Boundary Commissions have all agreed that the work should be completed by August 15 and Sir Cyril Radcliffe has concurred. All are very pleased that the Bill will make the findings of the Boundary Commissions an Award, since no party could contemplate with equanimity the riots which would break out if the boundaries remained indefinite on the day of the transfer of power.

9. In regard to the Punjab, the Sikhs are again becoming troublesome in their meetings and public statements and even Sardar Baldev Singh was reported in the press to have said at a meeting on July 8: "It is the demand of the Sikhs that the Boundary Commission should give its decision by August 15. I hope that the Boundary Commission will be fair to us, but if its decision is against us, we will resist it, and will not consider any sacrifice too great to vindicate the honour of the Panth."

I taxed him with this in the full Cabinet meeting on July 9, but he denied indignantly and said that he had been misreported. He intends to ask for a correction to be issued but,

although he may not have been absolutely correctly reported, I fear there is little doubt he was talking along these lines.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fifty-Ninth Meeting July 15, 1947*

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ITEM 3. THE PUNJAB

The Meeting considered two letters from the Governor of the Punjab dealing with two matters which the Punjab Partition Committee desired to be referred to the Central Partition Council.

His Excellency pointed out that it was assumed, in these letters, that the award of the Boundary Commission would not be available by August 15. The assumption more likely to prove correct was that the award would be available by August 15, but within so short a time before that date it would not be possible to make the adjustments required before then. His Excellency said that he was in fact expecting to receive the awards of the Boundary Commissions on the night of August 11.

His Excellency said that he believed that it might be far easier effectively to put down a general uprising of the Sikhs than it had been to deal with isolated cases of arson and stabbing.

Rao Bahadur Menon pointed out that the damage that the Sikhs were most likely to do would consist of the destruction of canal banks and it would be quite impossible to guard all the canals.

His Excellency emphasised the necessity for the areas adjacent to the final boundary being controlled by the two new Governments themselves. This would be preferable to control by the Joint Defence Council.

Mr. Scott advocated the desirability of broadcast speeches

by the Party Leaders, (perhaps the future Prime Ministers of the new Dominions) stating that disorder would be put down ruthlessly, immediately after the awards of the Boundary Commissions were published.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Fifth Meeting July 28, 1947*

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ITEM 8. THE POSSIBILITY OF DISTURBANCES IN THE PUNJAB (VCP 140)

This paper contained a note, for circulation at the Partition Council Meeting the following day, containing a paraphrased version of a report rendered by the Director of Intelligence to the effect that the Sikhs intended to start trouble on a big scale if Nankana Sahib was not included, by the award of the Boundary Commission, in East Punjab.

The Viceroy drew attention to the reports which had appeared in that morning's papers to the effect that it had been necessary to open fire on a meeting of Sikhs at Nankana Sahib the previous day. He said that he considered it doubtful whether it had been meeting illegally. Sir George Abell pointed out that a considerable number of people had been prevented from attending it as a result of this step.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that he had suggested to Sir Cyril Radcliffe the possibility that Nankana Sahib might be made a sort of Vatican. This could not be done by the Boundary Commission, but Sir Cyril Radcliffe might put forward this suggestion to the Muslim League.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Ninth Meeting August 9, 1947*

## ITEM 1. THE PUNJAB

It was stated that Sir Cyril Radcliffe would be ready by that evening to announce the award of the Punjab Boundary Commission. The Viceroy recalled that he had asked for the award to be ready by August 10. However, it was now for reconsideration whether it would in fact be desirable to publish it straight away. Without question, the earlier it was published, the more the British would have to bear the responsibility for the disturbances which would undoubtedly result.

Lord Ismay gave his opinion that it would be best to defer publication of the award until August 14.

Sir George Abell said that he had already asked Sir Evan Jenkins for an opinion as to the best date for the announcement. He pointed out that there were administrative advantages from early publication.

The Viceroy emphasised the necessity for maintaining secrecy not only on the terms of the award, but also on the fact that it would be ready that day.

Reference was made to a telegram from the Governor of the Punjab concerning the situation in the Boundary Area, which was described as most serious. Sir Evan Jenkins asked for Army reinforcements, if possible, for a tactical Reconnaissance Squadron; for the release of 200 provisional additional Police at present lent to Delhi; and for the earliest possible advance information of the Boundary Commission's award.

Lord Ismay said that he had spoken about the first three of these requests with the Commander-in-Chief that morning. As regards reinforcement troops, Field Marshal Auchinleck had already received a similar request from Major-General Rees, and was trying his best to raise these. He had pointed out, however,

the necessity for the Units being mixed; and it was mixed Units which Pakistan were wanting for the North-West Frontier. Most of the other available troops were committed in other directions. Field Marshal Auchinleck was fairly certain that the provision of some Tactical Reconnaissance aircraft was in hand; and he would expedite this.

Lord Ismay said that he had also spoken to the Commander-in-Chief about the loyalty of Sikhs in the Army. Field Marshal Auchinleck had stated that there was a proportion of Sikhs in nearly all the Units in the Punjab Boundary Force. He was having the question of their loyalty examined.

The Viceroy said that steps should be taken to ensure the loyalty of the Sikhs in the Governor-General's Bodyguard Sir George Abell should see Major Massey and ask him to make it clear to the Bodyguard that he (the Viceroy) had had nothing to do with the award of the Boundary Commission. and to ensure that any members of the Bodyguard whose loyalty was doubtful, should not attend August 15 parades.

The Viceroy said that the award of the Boundary Commission should not be put out in a communique from Viceroy's House, but rather published as a Gazette Extraordinary.

His Excellency the Viceroy:

(i) directed PSV (Private Secretary to the Viceroy) further to discuss with the Governor of the Punjab the timing of the announcement of the Boundary Commission's award;

(ii) directed PSV to arrange for the Boundary Commission's award, when published, to be contained in a Gazette Extraordinary;

(iii) directed PSV to tell Major Massey to take the steps in connection with the Governor-General's Bodyguard detailed above.

## Viceroy's Personal Reports
## Report No. 16 August 9, 1947

**Private and Top Secret**

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6. In my last week's Report, I referred to the continued rumours that the Sikhs were likely to make trouble after the Boundary Commission's award has been announced. On August 5, Jenkins sent down a Police Officer with a verbal report. I took advantage of the fact that there was a Partition Council Meeting the morning he arrived to keep back Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Patel so that they could hear what he had to say. This Police Officer is a member of the Punjab CID Control Staff, which co-ordinates investigation of disturbances cases, special interrogation and intelligence for all sources. He gave an account of the statements which had been made by various instigators of disturbances who had been arrested after incidents. The man who had given away most information was an ex-member of the INA, and had during the war been at the Japanese spy school at Penang and sent to India by submarine. This man's statement involved Master Tara Singh in the production of bombs and a Sikh plan to attack a certain headworks. Statements of other men who had been arrested involved Tara Singh in plans to wreck the trains carrying the Pakistan Governmental staff from Delhi to Karachi and in plans to assassinate Mr. Jinnah during the celebration in Karachi on August 15. The evidence produced was so incriminating that Jenkins may have to arrest Tarà Singh and the more hot-headed of his confederates shortly before August 15.

7. I have recently been in communication with Wylie* concern-

*Sir Francis Verner Wylie, ICS, Governor of the United Provinces from 1945.

ing the future of the Mutiny Memorials in the U.P. It is a matter on which the Metropolitan of India, who was staying with me last week, is much concerned. Wylie has suggested:

(*a*) The Residency at Lucknow. This should continue under the present arrangements whereby the proprietory rights vest in the Defence Department (who bear the cost of maintenance) and the management is entrusted to a small Committee of which the Area Commander is Chairman.

(*b*) The Memorial Well and Gardens at Cawnpore. These are the property of a regular Trust composed of European businessmen. They have agreed to offer 30 acres of the site to the Municipality free of cost on condition that it should be kept for ever as a space and not be built upon. They are considering Wylie's suggestion that the remaining 10 acres, including the Well and the Graveyard, should be enclosed and handed over to the Allahabad Diocese Trust; but may prefer to go on managing the Well and Graveyard area themselves.

(*c*) The Massacre Ghat at Cawnpore. The Cross on this is not a conspicuous object and Wylie is inclined to leave it alone.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 17 August 16, 1947**

## EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PUNJAB BOUNDARY COMMISSION TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY

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8. Certain representations were addressed to the Punjab Boundary Commission on behalf of the States of Bikaner and Bahawalpur, both of which States were interested in canals whose headworks were situated in the Punjab Province. I have

taken the view that an interest of this sort cannot weigh directly in the question before us as to the division of the Punjab between the Indian Union and Pakistan since the territorial division of the province does not affect right of private property, and I think that I am entitled to assume with confidence that any agreements that either of those States has made with the Provincial Government as to the sharing of water from these canals or otherwise will be respected by whatever Government hereafter assumes jurisdiction over the headworks concerned. I wish also to make it plain that no decision that is made by this Commission is intended to affect whatever territorial claim the State of Bahawalpur may have in respect of a number of villages lying between Sulemanke Weir and Gurka Ferry.

9. The task of delimiting a boundary in the Punjab is a difficult one. The claims of the respective parties ranged over a wide field of territory, but in my judgment the truly debatable ground in the end proved to lie in and around the area between the Beas and Sutlej rivers on the one hand, and the river Ravi on the other. The fixing of a Boundary in this area was further complicated by the existence of canal systems, so vital to the life of the Punjab but developed only under the conception of a single administration, and of systems of road and rail communication, which have been planned in the same way. There was also the stubborn geographical fact of the respective situations of Lahore and Amritsar, and the claims to each or both of those cities which each side vigorously maintained. After weighing to the best of my ability such other factors as appeared to me relevant as affecting the fundamental basis of contiguous majority areas, I have come to the decision set out in the Schedule which thus becomes the award of the Commission. I am conscious that there are legitimate criticisms to be made of it; as there are, I think, of any other line that might be chosen.

**10**. I have hesitated long over those not inconsiderable areas east of the Sutlej River and in the angle of the Beas and Sutlej Rivers in which Muslim majorities are found. But on the whole I have come to the conclusion that it would be in the true interest of neither State to extend the territories of the West Punjab to a strip on the far side of the Sutlej and that there are factors such as the disruption of railway communications and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary claims of contiguous majorities. But I must call attention to the fact that the Dipalpur Canal, which serves areas in the West Punjab, takes off from the Ferozepore headworks and I find it difficult to envisage a satisfactory demarcation of boundary at this point that is not accompanied by some arrangement for joint control of the intake of the different canals dependent on these headworks.

**11**. I have not found it possible to preserve undivided the irrigation system of the Upper Bari Doab Canal, which extends from Madhopur in the Pathankot Tahsil to the western border of the district of Lahore, although I have made small adjustments of the Lahore-Amritsar district boundary to mitigate some of the consequences of this severance; nor can I see any means of preserving under one territorial jurisdiction the Mandi Hydro-electric Scheme which supplies power in the districts of Kangra, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Lahore, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Sheikhupura and Lyallpur. I think it only right to express the hope that, where the drawing of a boundary line cannot avoid disrupting such unitary services as canal irrigation, railways, and electric power transmission, a solution may be found by agreement between the two States for some joint control of what has hitherto been a valuable common service.

**12**. I am conscious too that the award cannot go far towards satisfying sentiments and aspirations deeply held on either side

but directly in conflict as to their bearing on the placing of the boundary. If means are to be found to gratify to the full those sentiments and aspirations, I think that they must be found in political arrangements with which I am not concerned, and not in the decision of a boundary line drawn under the terms of reference of this Commission.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 17 August 16, 1947**

## EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BENGAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION TO HIS EXCELLENCY, THE VICEROY

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7. The question of drawing a satisfactory boundary line under our terms of reference between East and West Bengal was one to which the parties concerned propounded the most diverse solutions. The province offers few, if any, satisfactory natural boundaries, and its development has been on lines that do not well accord with a division by contiguous majority areas of Muslim and non-Muslim majorities.

8. In my view, the demarcation of a boundary line between East and West Bengal depended on the answers to be given to certain basic questions which may be stated as follows:

(1) To which State was the City of Calcutta to be assigned, or was it possible to adopt any method of dividing the City between the two States?

(2) If the City of Calcutta must be assigned as a whole to one or other of the States, what were its indispensable claims to the control of territory, such as all or part of the Nadia River system or the Kulti rivers, upon which the life of Calcutta as a city and port depended?

(3) Could the attractions of the Ganges-Padma-Madhumati river line displace the strong claims of the heavy concentration of Muslim majorities in the districts of Jessore and Nadia without doing too great a violence to the principle of our terms of reference?

(4) Could the district of Khulna usefully be held by a State different from that which held the district of Jessore?

(5) Was it right to assign to Eastern Bengal the considerable block of non-Muslim majorities in the districts of Malda and Dinajpur?

(6) Which State's claim ought to prevail in respect of the Districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in which the Muslim population amounted to 2.32 per cent of the whole in the case of Darjeeling, and to 23.08 per cent of the whole in the case of Jalpaiguri, but which constituted an area not in any natural sense contiguous to another non-Muslim area of Bengal?

(7) To which State should the Chittagong Hill Tracts be assigned, an area in which the Muslim population was only 3 per cent of the whole, but which it was difficult to assign to a State different from that which controlled the district of Chittagong itself?

9. After much discussion, my colleagues found that they were unable to arrive at an agreed view on any of these major issues. There were of course considerable areas of the Province in the south-west and north-east, and east, which provoked no controversy on either side: but, in the absence of any reconciliation on all main questions affecting the drawing of the boundary itself, my colleagues assented to the view at the close of our discussions that I had no alternative but to proceed to give my own decision.

10. This I now proceed to do: but I should like at the same time to express my gratitude to my colleagues for their indis-

pensable assistance in clarifying and discussing the difficult questions involved. The demarcation of the boundary line is described in detail in the schedule which forms Annexure A to this award, and in the map attached thereto, Annexure B. The map is annexed for purposes of illustration, and if there should be any divergence between the boundary as described in Annexure A and as delineated on the map in Annexure B, the description in Annexure A is to prevail.

**11.** I have done what I can in drawing the line to eliminate any avoidable cutting of railway communications and of river systems, which are of importance to the life of the province: but is quite impossible to draw a boundary under our terms of reference without causing some interruption of this sort, and I can only express the hope that arrangements can be made and maintained between the two States that will minimize the consequences of this interruption as far as possible.

CYRIL RADCLIFFE
New Delhi
August 12, 1947

## Viceroy's Personal Reports
## Report No. 17 August 16, 1947

**Top Secret and Personal**

This last week of British rule in India has been the most hectic of any. We have been working longer hours and under more trying conditions, and with crises of differing magnitudes arising every day, and sometimes two or three times a day. The problem of the States continued to occupy most of my time, particularly of those Rulers who have kept changing their mind up to the last moment, whether to accede to India, to Pakistan, or to neither. I paid my farewell visit to Karachi, and took part in unbelievable scenes on the day of the transfer of power in

Delhi. The issue which has created the greatest and most serious crisis to date has been the awards of the Boundary Commissions.

2. I had always anticipated that the awards could not possibly be popular with either party, and that both would probably accuse the Chairman of the Boundary Commissions of being biased against them. I have therefore taken the greatest pains not to get mixed up in the deliberations of the Commissions in any way. In fact, though I have repeatedly been asked both to interpret the Boundary Commissions' terms of reference and to put forward to them certain points of view (for example on behalf of the Sikh Princes), I have resolutely refused to do this. I have firmly kept out of the whole business but I am afraid that there is still a large section of public opinion in this country which is firmly convinced that I will settle the matter finally. For this reason I made my position as regards the Boundary awards absolutely clear in my address to the India Constituent Assembly.

3. I feel it necessary to put on record a brief review of the history of the Boundary Commissions, for the crisis that has been caused is in my opinion the most serious we have ever had to meet, and might have undone all the work of the past four months—so bitter have been the feelings.

4. On June 10, Nehru wrote agreeing to the proposal that each Commission should consist of an independent chairman and four other persons of whom two would be nominated by the Congress and two by the Muslim League. This proposal was agreed to by Jinnah.

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9. The first indication that the reception which the awards were likely to have was going to be even worse than anticipated was contained in a message given to Ismay on behalf of Liaquat

Ali Khan by the Pakistan Cabinet Secretary (Mohamed Ali) during a visit to Delhi from Karachi. This was a verbal message, but very strongly worded, to the effect that if indeed it proved true that the Gurdaspur district in the north Punjab area or even a large part of it had been given to East Punjab by the Boundary Commission, this would be regarded as a most serious fact by Jinnah and the Pakistan Government. If it turned out that this was a political and not a judicial decision, then this would amount to so grave a breach of faith as to imperil future friendly relations between Pakistan and the British.

**10.** In answering Liaquat, on August 11, Ismay (while pointing out that even I had not received the award) reminded him that I had had nothing to do with the Boundary Commissions; that I was determined to keep clear of the whole business; and that the Indian leaders themselves had selected the personnel of the Boundary Commissions, drafted their terms of reference, and undertaken to implement their awards.

**11.** It was on Tuesday, August 12, that I was finally informed by Radcliffe that his awards would be ready by noon the following day, just too late for me to see before leaving for Karachi. For some time past, I and my staff had been considering the question of when and how these awards should be published. From the purely administrative point of view, there were considerable advantages in immediate publication so that the new boundaries could take effect from August 15, and the officials of the right Dominion could be in their places to look after the districts which had been allotted to their side before that date. However, it had been obvious all along that, the later we postponed publication, the less would the inevitable odium react upon the British.

**12.** The matter came to a head at the Meeting which I held

with members of my staff on the evening of the 12th. The Bengal award had by then been sent in but I had deliberately refrained from reading it. I was told however that it allotted the Chittagong Hill Tracts to Pakistan. My Reforms Commissioner, V.P. Menon, was present at the meeting and was able to warn me of the disastrous effect that this was likely to have on the Congress leaders. He went so far as to say that Nehru and Patel were both certian to blow up, since they had only recently assured a delegation from the Chittagong Hill Tracts that there was no question of their being allotted to Pakistan (V.P. Menon admitted that they had no possible authority for making such a statement).

13. V.P. Menon went on to say that if the details of award were given to them before the 15th he thought they might well refuse to attend the meeting of the Constituent Assembly which I was to address. If given to them later in the day he thought they would refuse to come to the State banquet and the evening party. In any case he said that unless the situation were handled with the utmost care, Congress would blow up. I have never known V.P. Menon to mislead me, and I decided that somehow we must prevent the leaders from knowing the details of the award until after August 15; all our work and the hope of good Indo-British relations on the day of the transfer of power would risk being destroyed if we could not do this.

14. On August 13, I therefore wrote to Jinnah and Nehru telling them that I had not received all the awards by the time I left for Karachi, though I expected them that afternoon; and suggesting that there should be a meeting at Government House on August 16 to decide upon the timing and method of publication, and also the method of implementing the undertaking of the Partition Council to accept the award and to enforce the decisions contained in it.

**15**. Just as I was signing the letter to Nehru a letter arrived from Patel which is so incredible that I attach a copy of the complete letter as Appendix III. From this it will be seen that the one man I had regarded as a real statesman with both feet firmly on the ground, and a man of honour whose word was his bond, had turned out to be as hysterical as the rest. Here he was suggesting that if indeed the Chittagong Hill Tract were put into East Bengal the people would be justified in resisting this award by force and that the Central Government would be bound to support them. So much for his undertaking on behalf of India to accept and implement the awards whatever they might be.

**16**. The crazy part about all this is that Burrows had explained to me that the whole economic life of the people of the Hill Tracts depends upon East Bengal, that there are only one or two indifferent tracks through the jungle into Assam, and that it would be disastrous for the people themselves to be cut off from East Bengal. The population consists of less than a quarter of a million, nearly all tribesmen who, if they have any religion at all, are Buddhists (and so are technically non-Muslims, under the terms of the Boundary Commission). In a sense Chittagong, the only part of East Bengal, also depends upon the Hill Tracts; for if the jungles of the latter were subjected to unrestricted felling, I am told that Chittagong port would silt up. Candidly I was amazed that such a terrific crisis should have blown up over so small a matter. However, I have been long enough in India to realise that major crises are by no means confined to big matters.

**17**. Once more I had cause to thank the invaluable V.P. Menon for deliverance from the disaster which would have followed on my publishing the awards in good faith without prior reference to the leaders. Having decided not to announce the awards before August 15, I had no alternative but to send instructions to the

Governors that the Governments of the two halves of the split Provinces would have to take charge up to the national boundary on August 15, pending publication and implementation of the awards or of mutually agreed boundaries.

**18.** When I was at Karachi, although Liaquat saw the absolute need for him to come to Delhi on the 16th, both to discuss the terrible situation in the Punjab at a Defence Council meeting and to discuss the Boundary Commission Awards, it took me most of that evening and part of the following morning to persuade Jinnah to let Liaquat come.

**19.** This Joint Defence Council Meeting, to which I had had such difficulty in getting Jinnah to agree, was duly held this morning. I had both the Prime Ministers Nehru and Liaquat, both Home Ministers Patel and Abdur Rahman, Baldev Singh and the Supreme Commander (Auchinleck) present. The latter reported on his visit to the Punjab on the 14th and gave a horrifying account, of which a summary is contained in the following three pargraphs.

## C. THE TRANSFER OF POWER

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Fifty-Eighth Meeting July 14, 1947*

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### ITEM 3. CEREMONIES ON THE TRANSFER OF POWER

Rao Bahadur Menon stated that the Committee, which had been set up to consider the question of ceremonies on August 15 in Delhi, had agreed unanimously that there should be plenty of pomp. It had been suggested that Indian troops should line

the streets from The Viceroy's House entrance to the Constituent Assembly, where a Guard of Honour would be drawn up.

His Excellency said that he considered that all British troops partaking in the ceremonies should be in the courtyard of Viceroy's House.

It was suggested by Sir George Abell that there should be a flag salutation ceremony somewhere en route between The Viceroy's House and the Constituent Assembly—perhaps where the policeman stood at the bottom of the hill leading down from the Secretariat.

His Excellency stated that Mr. Jinnah had informed him that the Muslim League had decided against having a Union Jack in the upper canton of the Pakistan flag.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that Sardar Patel had taken little interest when told of the Muslim League decision, which would not affect whatever decision Congress might make.

His Excellency said that the question now arose as to what flags Governors of Provinces in the two new Dominions should fly. Perhaps blue flags, like those of the Governors-General, would be most suitable.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixtieth Meeting July 19, 1947*

## ITEM 1. CEREMONIES ON THE DATE OF THE TRANSFER OF POWER

### (a) Karachi

Colonel Currie said that he had discussed with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan the form which the ceremonies at Karachi on August 14 might take. It was suggested that the Viceroy should arrive in Karachi before lunch, which he would have privately with Mr. Jinnah. Then, at about 3 p.m. it was suggested that the Viceroy should drive through the streets, lined with troops, to

the Constituent Assembly, where there would be a Guard of Honour. After addressing the Constituent Assembly, the Viceroy and Mr. Jinnah would drive back in state to Government House. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had suggested that the part of the Governor-General's Bodyguard to be allotted to Pakistan should be there; but it had been explained that this was impossible because no cavalry lines were available.

Colonel Currie went on to say that he and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had agreed to suggest that there might then be a State dinner in the evening The Viceroy might propose the health of His Majesty the King and of the new Dominion of Pakistan and Mr. Jinnah that of the Viceroy and the new Dominion of India.

His Excellency said that he considered that it would be preferable for a garden party to be held on the evening instead of a dinner party. More people could be asked to a garden party—and it would enable him to return to Delhi at a more reasonable hour If, on the other hand, Mr. Jinnah was very keen on a dinner party, that should take place reasonably early; and any speeches made there should be "off the record". His Excellency said that he wished Lord Ismay to accompany him to Karachi on August 14.

**(b) Delhi**

In connection with the Delhi ceremonies on August 15, Rao Bahadur Menon suggested that Ministers of the new Government should be sworn in at Viceroy's House in the morning and then drive down to the Constituent Assembly ahead of His Excellency. He confirmed that it would not be necessary for His Excellency to be sworn in.

The Viceroy said that it might be better to have a garden party, rather than a dinner party, in Delhi also; or, if the weather was wet an indoor reception. Rao Bahadur Menon suggested that there should be fireworks, and His Excellency said that this was an admirable idea.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Fourth Meeting July 26, 1947*

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ITEM 3. CEREMONIES ON THE DATE OF THE TRANSFER OF POWER

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(*f*) A general instruction should be sent to Governors and Chief Commissioners, stating his policy that the Union Jack should not fly on August 15, and should in no circumstances be hauled down; and that the form of ceremonies on August 15 was primarily a matter for the new Governors and Governments and would vary, as would any ceremonies for departing Governors on August 14, from Province to Province.

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(*j*) At the dinner party there should be only two toasts:
(i) The King, and
(ii) The new Dominion of Pakistan
The first would be either by the Viceroy or by Mr. Jinnah, the second would be by the Viceroy; there should be no speeches.

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(*u*) There should be a new Dominion of India flag in the MSV ballroom.

(*v*) So far as the playing of *God Save The King* was concerned, it was foolish to do anything which might be provocative. Therefore, this was to be avoided as far as possible.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Fifth Meeting July 28, 1947*

## ITEM 1. CEREMONIES ON THE DATE OF THE TRANSFER OF POWER

The Viceroy said that he had asked Pandit Nehru whether he and Sardar Patel would like, on the occasion of the ceremonies in Delhi on August 15, to drive either in the State carriage with Their Excellencies or in a semi-State carriage. He had told Pandit Nehru that he would be delighted if he and Sardar Patel would accept this invitation; but had privately advised against acceptance as it might weaken their position. Pandit Nehru had replied that this represented his feelings exactly; he would have hated not to have been asked, but would equally have hated to have had to accept.

The Viceroy said that Pandit Nehru had volunteered the opinion that he was opposed to the hauling down of the Union Jack during the ceremonies on August 15.

The Viceroy said that the question of the swearing in of himself as Governor-General of the Dominion of India and of the new Ministers had also arisen during his conversations with Pandit Nehru.

Rao Bahadur Menon suggested that the form of oath to be taken by the Ministers might be modified by cutting out direct reference to His Majesty. If Ministers swore allegiance to the Constitution, this implied allegiance to His Majesty—as the Constitution of course, recognised the King. The Viceroy said that this suggestion should be put forward to the Secretary of State.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that there would be no objection to the oaths being taken in public. In fact there was a considerable feeling among members of the Constituent Assembly that His Excellency should take and administer the oaths in public.

His Excellency said that publicity should be accorded to the aspect that, whereas previously the oath sworn by the Governor-General was to the King as King in the United Kingdom and Emperor of India, the new oath was to the King in India without any connection with the United Kingdom.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that Sir Patrick Spens would still be Chief Justice on August 15 and would administer the oath to His Excellency.

The Viceroy said that, in following the suggested procedure for swearing-in and speeches at the Constituent Assembly, no notice need be taken of the legal position whereby he would have ceased to be Viceroy immediately after midnight on the night of August 14/15.

His Excellency said that, during his speech to the Constituent Assembly, he would announce an amnesty as the first act of the new Government, making it clear that this followed precedents in past years on great occasions; for example when the Legislative Assembly was first opened in 1921.

His Excellency stated that he wished it to be recognised as a general principle that *God Save The King*, would, on and after August 15, only be played in Viceroy's House and outside as little as possible.

His Excellency added that he had decided that there should be both dinner and a reception at Viceroy's House on the evening of August 15. Information should be given to the Press that, at this dinner, the health of the King, as opposed to that of the King Emperor, would be drunk for the first time in India.

His Excellency ruled that there was no objection to the Pakistan Government being informed of the intended procedure in Delhi on August 15. He pointed out that the ceremonies in Pakistan over both August 14 and 15 would correspond to those in Delhi on August 15; this point should be made clear to the Press.

The Viceroy drew attention to a telegram from the Secretary of State containing the text of a draft Royal message for him to

convey to the Constituent Assemblies of India and Pakistan. The Viceroy expressed the opinion this was extremely badly drafted.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Sixth Meeting August 2, 1947*

### ITEM 1. CEREMONIES ON THE DATE OF THE TRANSFER OF POWER

Colonel Currie raised the question of the status of the Supreme Commander during the parade which was to take place in Delhi, on August 15. He said that he understood that the Supreme Commander wished clearly to know what position he would hold before he decided whether or not he should attend.

The Viceroy pointed out that the Supreme Commander would not be primarily concerned with this parade, as it was being organised by the Dominion of India. He suggested that there should be only one salute, namely when he himself arrived. There was a parallel, in a parade for holders of the Victoria Cross which had taken place at the Red Fort during the war, which Lord Ismay might mention during discussions with Field Marshal Auchinleck.

Colonel Currie suggested that, at the Delhi Constituent Assembly, His Excellency should occupy the President's chair that Dr. Rajendra Prasad should sit on his right rear and Her Excellency on his left rear. The Viceroy said that Colonel Currie should ask Rao Bahadur Menon to put forward this suggestion to Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

So far as seating arrangements at the Karachi Constituent Assembly were concerned, Colonel Currie suggested that His Excellency shoud occupy the President's chair with Mr. Jinnah and Her Excellency sitting just below. The Viceroy asked Colonel Currie to clear this suggestion with Mr. Jinnah's Private Secretary-Designate.

Colonel Currie stated that Mr. Jinnah had suggested that a State coach should be made available for the ceremonies at Karachi on August 14. He explained that the semi-State coach could be made available, but there were only ten horses, of which one was lame and six would be required for Delhi. The project did not therefore appear to be practicable.

The meeting then considered a draft telegram to Governors on the subject of the playing of the national anthem on and after the date of the transfer of power. The Viceroy approved this draft telegram, subject to a minor amendment.

*Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings*
*Sixty-Seventh Meeting August 5, 1947*

## ITEM 1. CEREMONIES ON THE DATE OF THE TRANSFER OF POWER

**(a) Ceremonies in the Constituent Assemblies**

Colonel Currie said that he had discussed with Mr. Jinnah's Private Secretary the detail of the ceremonies which were to take place at Karachi on August 14. He had pointed out that it was an understood arrangement for the Viceroy to take the seat of honour always and everywhere in India. Mr. Jinnah's Private Secretary had, however, taken the line that the Constituent Assembly was a sovereign body, and that the President must have the seat of honour. Colonel Currie added that he had confirmed with Colonel Birnis that it was possible to remove the present structure in which the President usually sat, and to place there instead three "throney-looking" seats.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that it had definitely been arranged that His Excellency should have the seat of honour in the Indian Constituent Assembly on August 15. There was an legal argument at all for any other arrangement.

Colonel Currie pointed out that it was not intended that

there should be any ceremonies in the Constituent Assembly at Karachi on August 15. It appeared that August 14 was being treated as the main occasion in this respect. He also mentioned that it had been reported to him that the Muslim League flag was already flying over the Karachi Constituent Assembly.

Lord Ismay gave his opinion that it was quite clear that the Viceroy could not take the second seat on this occasion. He suggested that the Viceroy should send a letter to Mr. Jinnah pointing out that his Private Secretary must surely be under a misapprehension. If Mr. Jinnah persisted, he advised that the Viceroy should not take part in the ceremonies at the Constituent Assembly.

The Viceroy asked whether it was legally possible for Mr. Jinnah to be President of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly after August 15. Mr. Morris Jones gave his opinion that no Governor-General could be President of a body which he himself summoned. Rao Bahadur Menon said that in his opinion Mr. Jinnah could probably do as he liked in this respect.

The Viceroy asked whether it was considered essential that he should read his speeches to both Constituent Assemblies. Lord Ismay, Mr. Campbell-Johnson and Rao Bahadur Menon all advised that this would be correct.

**(b) Dinner Party at Karachi**

Colonel Currie said that Mr. Jinnah had signified his desire to propose His Majesty's health at the dinner party which was to take place in Karachi on August 14. He had agreed that this dinner Their Excellencies should take the places of honour.

**(c) Cars**

The Viceroy ruled that his Rolls Royce and one of the cars belonging to PSV's Office should be made available to Mr. Jinnah. On the question to whether or not his Buick should be sent down to Karachi to take part in the ceremonies on August 14, he

asked Colonel Currie first to make every effort to arrange for a large open car locally available to be put at his disposal for this purpose If it was eventually decided that the Buick should go, this was to be on the clear understanding that it would return forthwith.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 16 August 9, 1947**

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**21**. Gandhi has announced his decision to spend the rest of his life in Pakistan looking after the minorities. This will infuriate Jinnah, but will be a great relief to Congress for, as I have said before, his influence is largely negative or even destructive and directed against the only man who has his feet firmly on the ground, Vallabhbhai Patel

**22**. The astrologers are being rather tiresome since both the 13th and 15th have been declared inauspicious days, whereas the 14th is auspicious. I was not warned that I ought to consult the astrologers before fixing the day for the transfer of power, but luckily this has been got over by the Constituent Assembly deciding to meet before midnight on the auspicious 14th and take over power as midnight strikes which is apparently still an auspicious moment.

**Viceroy's Personal Reports**
**Report No. 17 August 16, 1947**

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**55**. A State Banquet for 60 was held on the night of the 13th, at which it had been agreed that there should be two toasts but no speeches, and this was confirmed at 7 p.m. Judge then of my horror when Jinnah stood up and pulled half a dozen closely

typed sheets out of his pocket, and proceeded to deliver a speech, finally proposing the health of the King. I had to make an impromptu speech proposing the health of Pakistan. This banquet was followed by a reception which was attended by some 1500 of the leading citizens of Pakistan, which included some very queer looking "jungly" men.

**56.** I sat between Miss Jinnah and Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. They both pulled my leg about the midnight ceremonies in Delhi saying that it was astounding that a responsible Government could be guided by astrologers in such an important matter. I refrained from retorting that the whole Karachi programme had had to be changed because Jinnah had forgotten that it was Ramazan and had had to change the lunch party he had himself suggested to a dinner party.

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**62.** August 15 has certainly turned out to be the most remarkable and inspiring day of my life. We started at 8.30 with the Swearing-In Ceremony in the Durbar Hall in front of an official audience of some 500, including a number of ruling Princes. The official guests, including Ambassadors, Prince and the Cabinet, then drove in procession from Government House (ex-Viceroy's House) to the Council Chamber.

**63.** Never have such crowds been seen within the memory of anyone I have spoken to. Not only did they line every rooftop and vantage point, but, they pressed round so thick as to become finally quite unmanageable. At the Council Chamber it had fortunately been arranged that there should be two Guards of Honour (RIN) and (RIAF) of 100 men each. These 200 men joined with the police were just able to keep the crowd back sufficiently to let us get out of the State coach without being physically lifted out of it by the crowd.

64. The ceremony in the Council Chamber was extremely dignified and my speech was well received. Fortunately two more Guards of Honour of the Indian Army were due for the departure ceremony, and I gave orders that the four Guards of Honour were to pile arms inside the Council Chamber, and then endeavour to keep the crowd back. As we were about to depart they said that it was doubtful whether the 400 men of the Guards of Honour could keep the way clear to the coach, so Nehru went on to the roof and waved to the crowd to go back; the door was then opened and, surrounded by our staff, we fought our way through to the coach.

65. It took us half an hour to go the short distance back, for we had to go slowly through the crowds. Once we were held up for some five minutes by the pressure of the crowds. Apart from the usual cries of, "Jai Hind" and, "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai" and, "Pandit Nehru Ki Jai", a surprising number shouted out, "Mountbatten Ki Jai", and "Lady Mountbatten Ki Jai" and more than once "Pandit Mountbatten Ki Jai."

66. After lunch we decided to pay an impromptu visit to the great children's fete being held in the Roshanara Park. This was an unqualified success. Thousands of children gathering all round us cheering and yelling and trying to shake hands. I felt that it would be a good idea to get out of uniform and into informal surroundings for at least one of the Independence Day celebrations.

67. At 6 p.m. the great event of the day was to take place—the salutation of the new Dominion flag. This programme had originally included a ceremonial lowering of the Union Jack, but when I discussed this with Nehru he entirely agreed that this was a day they wanted everybody to be happy, and if the lowering of the Union Jack in any way offended British sus-

ceptibilities, he would certainly see that it did not take place, the more so as the Union Jack would still be flown on a dozen days a year in the Dominion.

68. A parade had been arranged of the units of the three Services, pages of orders had been issued, rehearsals had been going on for days, and seats on raised platforms had been provided. The crowds however were far beyond the control of the police. Some Indian officials estimate that there were 600,000 people there. But personally I doubt if there were more than a quarter of a million. At all events they thronged the processional route and if possible gave my wife and myself a greater reception than in the morning.

69. But for the admirable Bodygurad with their wonderfully trained and patient horses, we should never have been able to get on the ground. But at a slow walk they managed to breast a way through the crowd up to the appointed position opposite the Grand Stand and the Parade. There was, however, nothing to be seen of the Grand Stand, and although a row of bright coloured pugrees in the crowd indicated where the troops had been engulfed there was no other indication of a military parade.

70. Nehru fought his way to the coach and climbed in to tell us that our daughter Pamela was safe. George Abell (my late Private Secretary) described how Nehru came to their rescue when they were overwhelmed by the crowd, fighting like a maniac, striking people right and left and eventually taking the topee off a man who annoyed him particularly and smashing it over his head.

71. Major-General Rajendra Singh, the Delhi Area Commander, Nehru and I had a hurried consultation and we decided that the only thing to do was to hoist the flag and fire the salute and give up all other idea of the programme. This was done mid

scenes of the most fantastic rejoicing, and as the flag broke a brilliant rainbow appeared in the sky which was taken by the whole crowd as a good omen. (I had never noticed how closely a rainbow could resemble the new Dominion Flag of saffron, white and green.)

72. Meanwhile danger of a large scale accident was becoming so great that we decided that the only thing to do was to try and move the coach on through the crowd and draw the crowd with us. For this reason I invited Nehru to stay in the coach which he did, sitting like a schoolboy on the front hood above the seats. Meanwhile refugees who had fainted or had been almost crushed under the wheels were pulled on board and we ended with four Indian ladies with their children, the Polish wife of a British officer and an Indian press man who crawled up behind. The Bodyguard gradually opened a way through the crowd and then the whole throng began to follow us. Hundreds of thousands of people all running together is an impressive sight several thousands ran the whole three miles back alongside the coach and behind it, being stopped finally by the police only at the gates of Government House.

73. No British or Indian whom I have since met has ever remembered crowd scenes even approaching those that were witnessed yesterday; but the significant feature is that numerous Indian observers all argreed that the reception which was accorded to us was no whit less enthusiastic than that accorded to their own leaders. This sounds rather incredible but it appears to be a fact and was generously referred to by Nehru in his speech last night as the best omen for the future good relations between our two countries.

*Postscript telephoned from Bombay on the evening of August 17*

The departure of British troops went off extremely well amidst scenes of great enthusiasm.

Our reception in Bombay was far more remarkable than in Delhi. The local police estimated the crowd as the greatest in the history of the city. Several hundreds of thousands lined the many miles of route, often breaking through the cordon and stopping our open car through sheer weight of numbers.

The demonstration was all the more remarkable since the drives from Government House to the Docks, and later to the Prime Minister's party were not intended as events in themselves.

The crowd definitely shouted out, "England Zindabad" and "Jai England."